The
Thirty-seven Nats

A Phase of Spirit-Worship prevailing in Burma,

BY

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With full-page and other illustrations.

နတ်သုံးဆယ့်ခုနစ်ပါး



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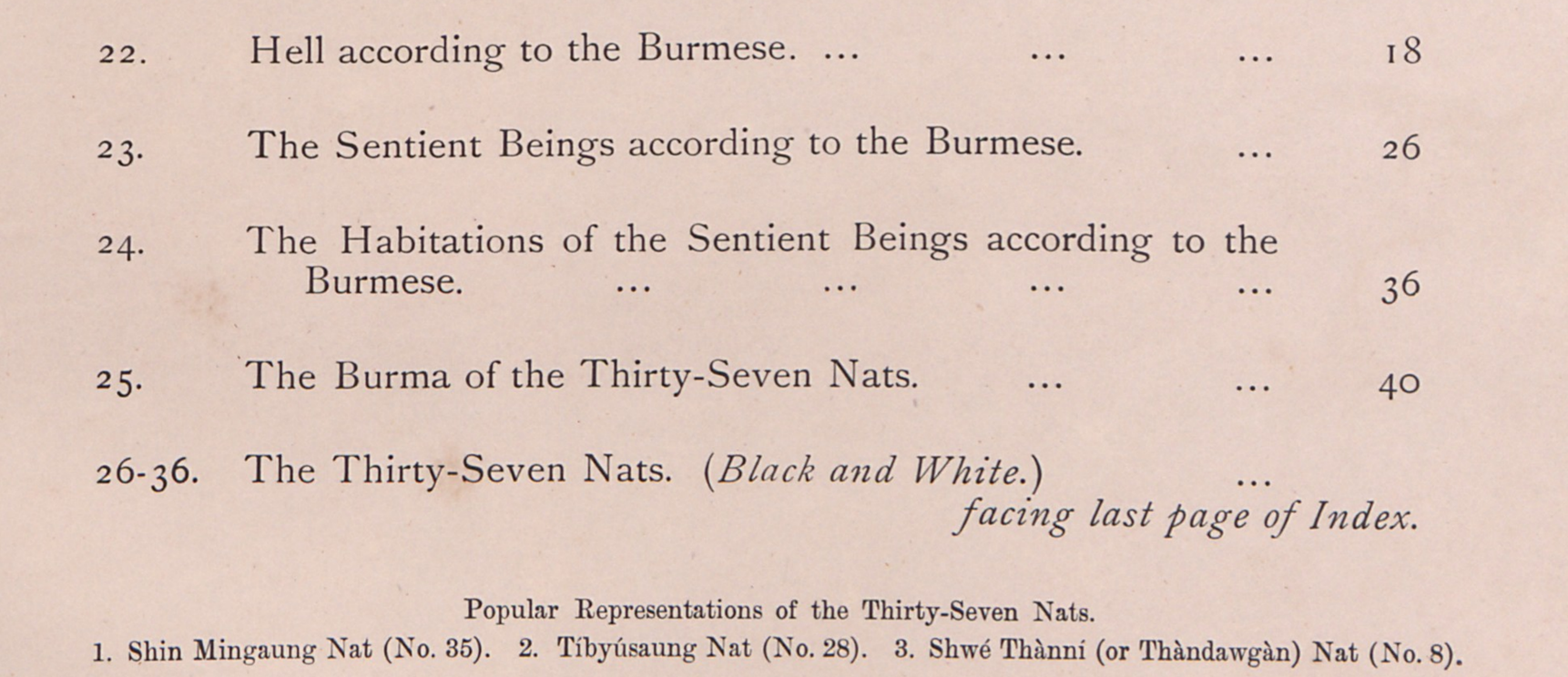


Popular Representations of the Thirty-Seven Nats.
1. Yun Min (or Bayin) Nat (No. 22). 2. Thagyá Nat (No. 1). 3. Maung Pó Tú Nat (No. 21).

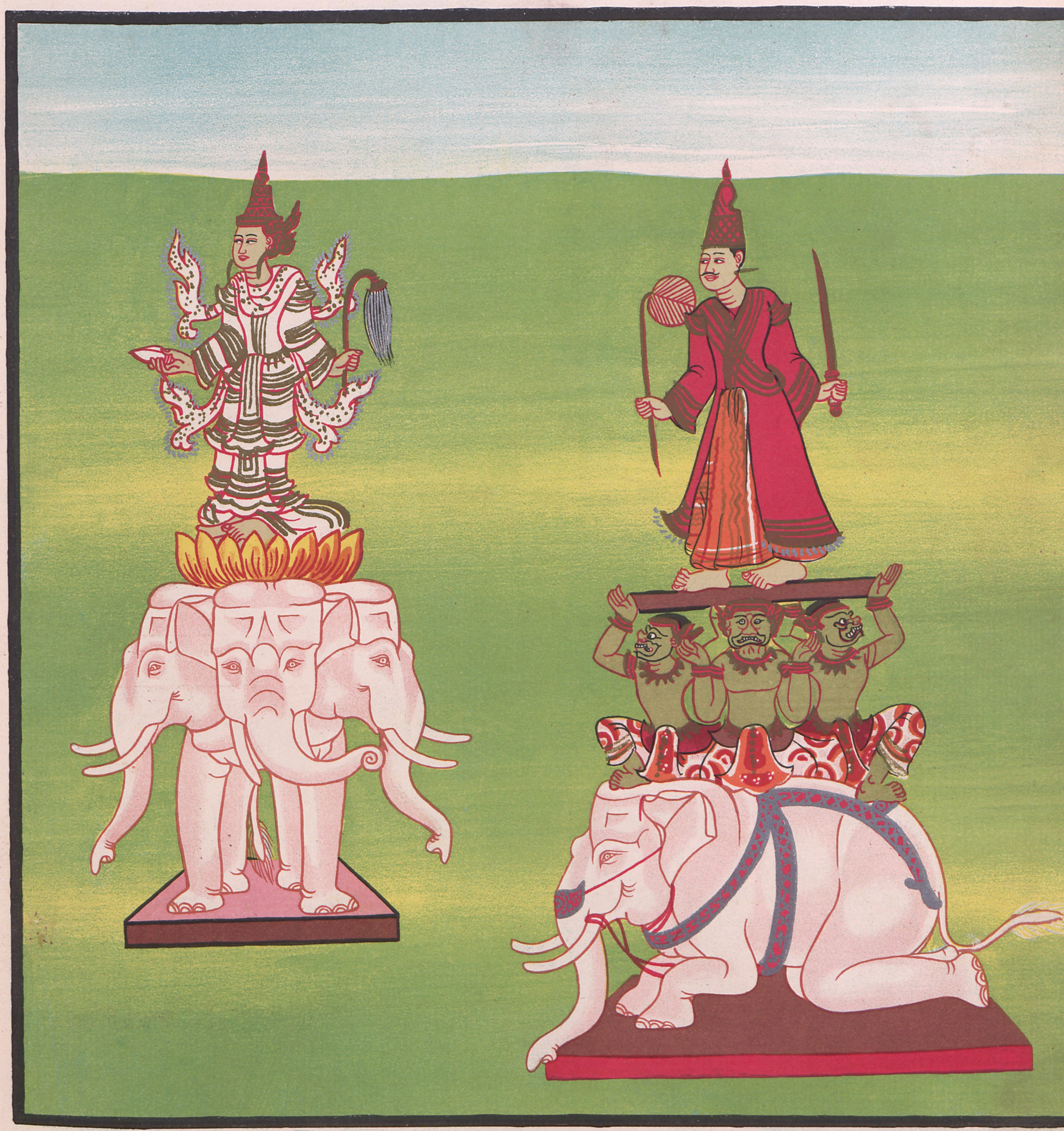
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Popular Representations of the Thirty-Seven Nats.
1. Shin Mingaung Nat (No. 35). 2. Tíbyúsaung Nat (No. 28). 3. Shwé Thànní (or Thàndawgàn) Nat (No. 8).



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1. Thagyá Nat.

၁။ ။သိကြားနတ်။

2. Mahágirí Nat.

၂။ ။မဟာဂီရိနတ်။

3. Hnamádawgyí Nat.

၃။ ။နှာမတော်ကြီးနတ်။

4. Shwe Nabé Nat.

၄။ ။ရွှေနဘေနတ်။



5. Thónban Hla Nat.

၅။ ။သုံးဘန်လှနတ်။

6. Taung-ngu Mingaung Nat.

၆။ ။တောင်ငူမင်းခေါင်နတ်။



7. Mintará Nat.

၇။ ။မင်းတရားနတ်။

8. Thandawgán Nat.

၀။ ။သံတော်ခံနတ်။



9. Shwe Nawrathá Nat.
၉။ ။ရွှေနှဉ်ရထားနတ်။

10. Aungzwámagyí Nat.
၁၀။ ။အောင်စွာမကြီးနတ်။



11. Ngázíshin Nat.
၁၁။ ။ငါးစိးရှင်နတ်။

12. Aungbinlè Sinbyushin Nat.
၁၂။ ။အောင်ပင်လယ်ဆင်ဖြူရှင်နတ်။



13. Taungmagyí Nat.

၁၃။ ။တောင်မကြီးနတ်။

14. Maung Minshin Nat.

၁၄။ ။မောင်မင်းရှင်နတ်။

15. Shindaw Nat.

၁၅။ ။ရှင်တော်နတ်။

16. Nyaung-gyin Nat.

၁၆။ ။ညောင်ကျင်းနတ်။



17. Tabìn Shwédí Nat.

၁၇။ ။တပင်ဒွေထီးနှတ်။

18. Minyè Aungdin Nat.

၁၀။ ။မင်းရဲအောင်တင်နှတ်။



19. Shwe Sippin Nat.

၁၉။ ။ရွှေစင်ပင်နတ်။



20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat.

၂၀။ ။မယ်တော်ရွှေစကားနတ်။



21. Maung Po Tu Nat.

၂၁။ ။မောင်ဘိုးတူနတ်။

22. Yun Bayìn Nat.

၂၂။ ။ယွန်းဘုရင်နတ်။



23. Maung Minbyú Nat.

၂၃။ ။မောင်မင်းဖြူနတ်။

24. Mándalé Bódaw Nat.

၂၄။ ။မန္တလေးတိုးတော်နတ်။



25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat.

၂၅။ ။ရွှေဖျင်းနောင်တော်နတ်။

26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat.

၂၆။ ။ရွှေဖျင်းညီတော်နတ်။



27. Mintha Maung Shin Nat.

၂၇။ ။မင်းသားမောင်ရှင်နတ်။

28. Tibyusaung Nat.

၂၀။ ။ထီးဖြူဆောင်းနတ်။

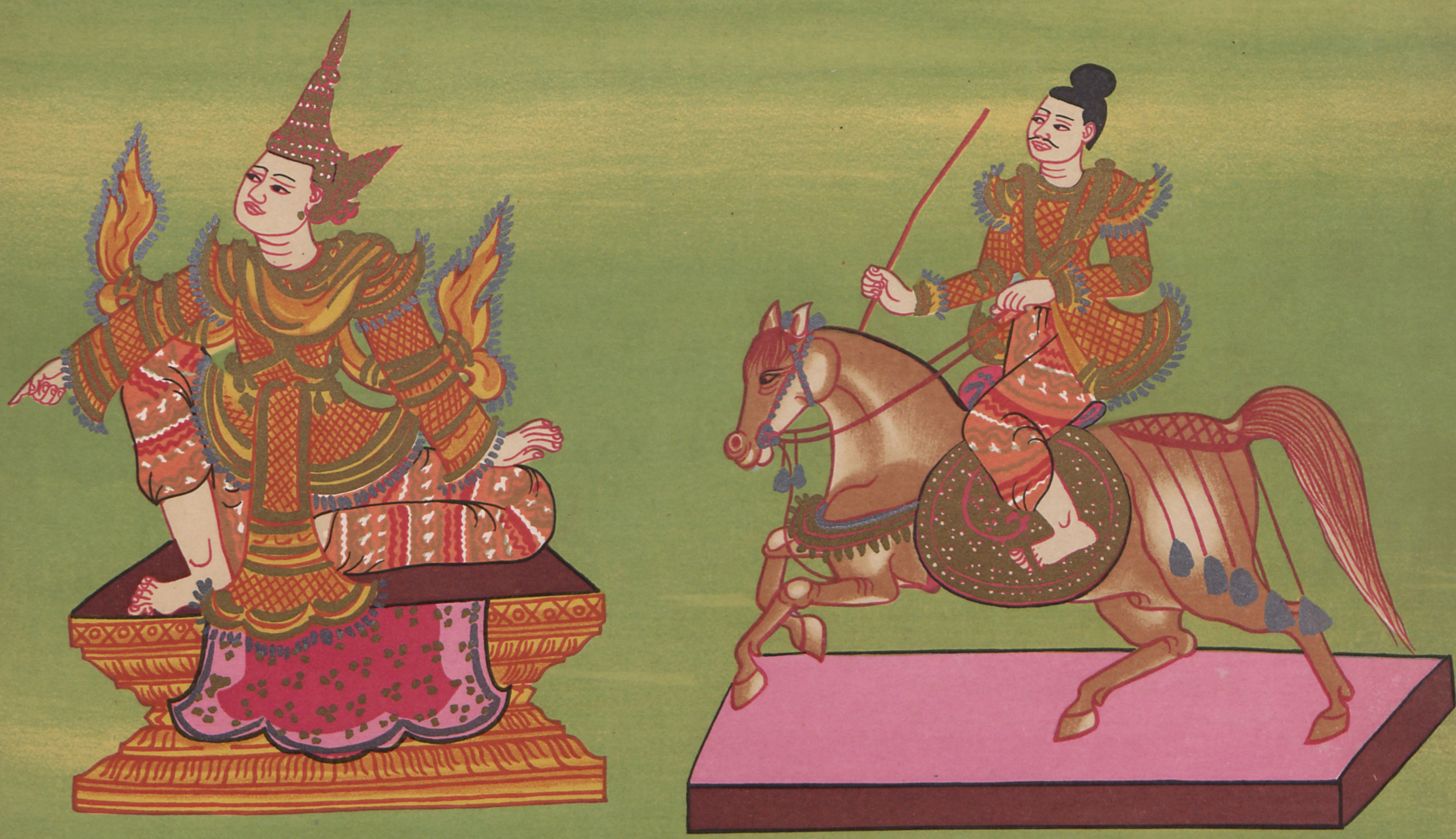


29. Tíbyusaung Mèdaw Nat.

၂၉။ ။ထီးဖြူဆောင်းမယ်တော်နတ်။

30. Bayìnmáshin Mingaung Nat.

၃၀။ ။ဘုရင်မရှင်မင်းခေါင်နတ်။



31. Min Síthú Nat.
၃၁။ ။မင်းစည်သူနတ်။

32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.
၃၂။ ။မင်းကျော်စွာနတ်။



33. Myaukpet Shinmá Nat.

၃၃။ ။မြောက်ဘက်ရှင်မနတ်။

34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.

၃၄။ ။အနောက်မိဘုရားနတ်။



35. Shingón Nat.

၃၅။ ။ရှင်ကုန်းနတ်။

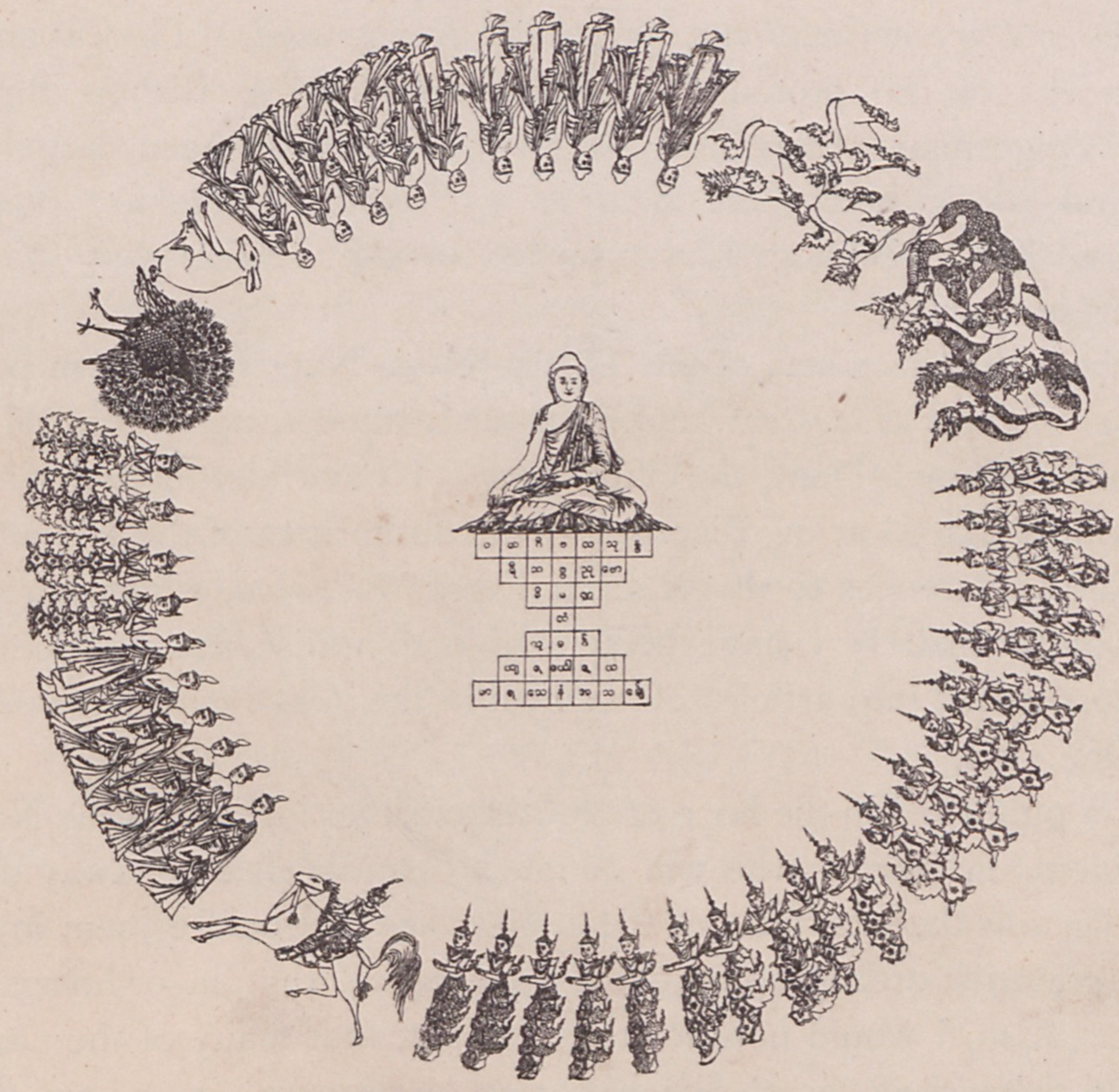
36. Shingwá Nat.

၃၆။ ။ရှင်ကွန်တ်။



37. Shin-nèmí Nat.

၃၇။ ။ရှင်နဲမိနတ်။



စစ်ဘိုလ်များခေါင်းဝါင်းမှာ
ရေးသည်ဟုဆို

Charm printed on a turban potent against all war risks.

Buddha seated on a cabalistic throne, surrounded by an army of terrestrial Nats led by a *balú* (ogre) riding, accompanied by *naga* (serpents) and *chinthé* (lions), following the celestial Nats, led by a peacock (the sun) and a hare (the moon), behind a band of monks.

PREFACE.

IN order to understand the daily life and aspirations of the ordinary Burman, it is not sufficient to know that he is by professed religion a Buddhist and to understand what his Buddhism teaches. It is necessary to know also that he is a firm believer in Nats or Spirits, and to grasp how the superstitions connected with this faith affect him in his daily life and notions. There are many references to this subject in the European literature on Burma, but there has, as yet, been no definite study of it.

In this work, I have endeavoured to put together some of the facts about the Nats I have gathered during a prolonged study of them, and I have tried to make the subject clear by illustrating my remarks from collections in my possession, and, in a few cases, from the published works of others. I have noted down for my own information the references to Burmese spirit-worship in every work bearing on the subject that has become known to me in the course of years, but in this volume I have, nevertheless, confined myself to general statements, reserving the details of my information to a future opportunity, by which time I can but hope that the study will have become better known and appreciated. The only part of this book that goes at all into detail, is that connected directly with the Thirty-Seven Nats themselves. In that portion I have taken my own line, although I am aware that it is not exactly that of other students, who, in some cases, have a profound knowledge of Burma. However, from a most careful collation of their publications with the knowledge at my own disposal, I feel I am justified in putting forward my views with at least as much confidence as any of my contemporaries can put forward theirs.

In stating the case generally of Animism and Animistic practices in Burma, I have been much more concerned in placing the facts, as they appear to me to be correct, before the reader, than in pressing my

private views upon him, and I have therefore not hesitated to incorporate the *ipsissima verba* of other writers into my text, whenever these put the facts clearly and correctly. The writers, whose works are thus chiefly drawn upon, are Sir George Scott, in the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, and in *The Burman*, than whom no clearer writer on Burma exists, except perhaps Taw Sein Ko, whose papers before the Ninth Oriental Congress in London, 1892, and in the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, have been freely used. The capital *Census Report*, 1901, of Mr. C. C. Lowis, and the works of the profound Catholic missionaries, Bishop Bigandet (*Life and Legend of Gaudama*) and Father Sangermano (*Burmese Empire*), have also been largely used, and so, to some degree, has that romantic and poetic book, *The Soul of a People*. There are other excellent works on the Burmese, notably those starred in the Bibliography attached to this Preface, but I have not used them to any considerable extent for the present work.

For illustrations, apart from the three sets of the Thirty-Seven Nats in my own possession, I have drawn to a small extent upon the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, and, in three instances, upon Mrs. Hart's *Picturesque Burma*, with the courteous permission of Messrs. Dent, the publishers. I have also drawn largely upon a MS. volume, described in Chapter VIII, kindly placed at my disposal by the authorities of the India Office. There are, besides, a number of interesting pictorial references to the Nats in Ferrar's *Burma*, which would have been of value for inclusion in this volume, but unfortunately I have been unable to utilise them. Some of the illustrations now given have been already incorporated into articles of my own in the *Journal of Indian Art* for 1900, and in the *Indian Antiquary* of the same year.

As the present volume is published in the hope of arousing further interest in the Nats and the form of religion which they represent, in residents in Burma, who can do much towards clearing away difficulties and uncertainties by further research into details, now that the facts of the subject are laid before them in a definite sequence, I have made no attempt to adopt a scientific orthography, but have adopted that in ordinary use among Europeans in Burma and best understood. Also, I would note for their benefit, that many of the names and titles to be found used in reference to the Nats themselves, or to the historical personages on whom the stories about them are fathered, are merely Burmese transcriptions of Pali, and, in a few cases, of Sanskrit words. Every Nat has probably in addition a personal name among the people, which should be worth unearthing.

Examples of Pali or Sanskrit titles are the following :—

Burmese vulgar pron. in brackets.	Pali except where marked Sanskrit.	Burmese vulgar pron. in brackets.	Pali except where marked Sanskrit.
Anawrathá (Nawyetá)	Anuruddha	Narathú (Neyáthú)	Narasúra
Athingayá	Asaṅkhya	Nawrathá (Nawyetá)	Anuruddha
Dáyaká	Dáraka	Síthú	Jáyasúra
Dútiyá	Dutiya	Súlamani	Chúḷamani
Eyáwun	Erávaṇa	Thagyá	Skr. Ṣakra (P. Sakka)
Hantháwadí	Haṁsávatí	Thénga Yáza	Siṅga Rája
Mahágíri (Mágayé)	Skr. Mahágriha (P.°ghara)	Thiháthú	Síhasúra
Maháthámbawá	Mahásambhava	Thírikettayá	Skr. Ṣrikshétra
Máthírithú (Máthayéthú)	Mahásirisúra	Thíriwundá	Sirivantá
Nagá	Nága	Uzená	Yójana
Nagarít (Nagayit)	Nágarája	Yahán	Skr. Arahaṇta (P. Arahá)
Narabadísíthú (Neyábadí°)	Narapati Jáyasúra	Yázadarit (Yázadayit)	Rájádhirája
Narathéngá (Neyá°)	Narasinga		

As the use of a good many vernacular terms, current in connection with the Nats, will be unavoidable, a brief Glossary will precede the text. The following Bibliography of the subject will be of use to students, it being understood that the majority of the books noted merely casually refer to the Nats. Those from which the best information is to be procured are starred in the list.

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*Asiatick Researches. Vol. VI. London, 1801.
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*Census of India, 1901. Vol. IX. Burma Report, Vol. I. Rangoon, 1902.
*Childers, R. C. Pali Dictionary. London, 1875.
*Congress of Orientalists, Transactions of the Ninth International (Taw Sein Ko). Vol. I. London, 1893.
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Cuming, E. D. In the Shadow of the Pagoda. London, 1893.
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*Goss, L. A. We-Than-Da-Ya. Rangoon, 1886.
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*Shway Yeo (Sir G. Scott). The Burman. London, 1882.
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Taw Sein Ko. Tour in the Amherst, Shwegyin and Pegu Districts. Burma, 1892.
Temple, Sir R. C. *See* Indian Antiquary, The.
Winston, W. R. Four Years in Upper Burma. London, 1892.
Yule, H. Mission to Ava. London, 1858.

A verbal Index for ready reference, including every place and person mentioned in the work, will be found at the end of the volume.

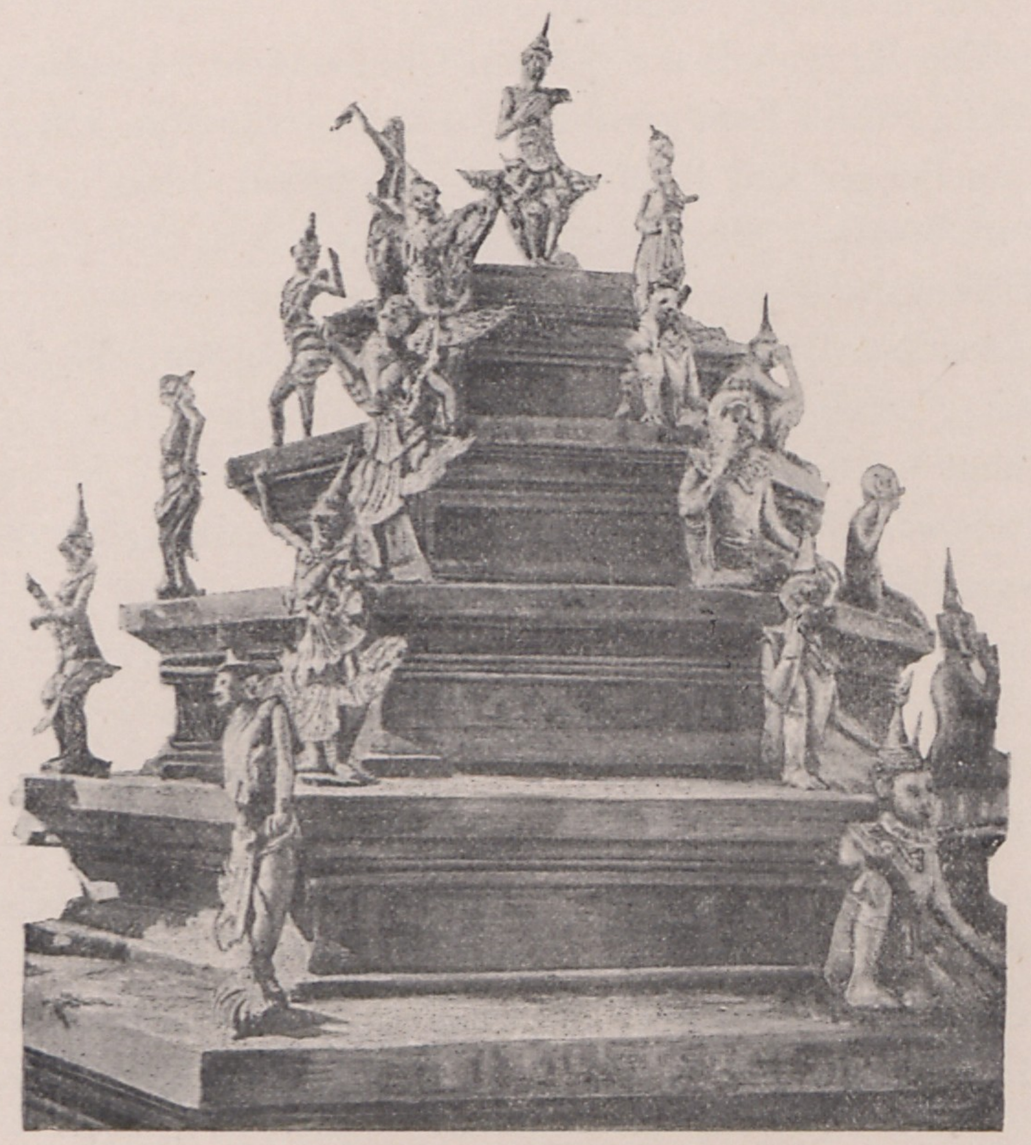
I cannot close this Preface without an acknowledgment of the admirable printing and illustrating devoted to it by Messrs. W. Griggs and Sons, Ltd., and the very careful attention given to them by Mr. W. Griggs personally.

R. C. TEMPLE.

The Nash, Worcester.
1906.



Figures of Nats carved in wood.
1. Yun Bayin Nat. 2. Bódaw Nat. 3. Byammá Nat.



The Nats of the Dévalóka or Nat-world on Mount Méru, or Myinmó, from the platform of the Shwé Dagón Pagoda at Rangoon.

GLOSSARY.

Agni, the God of Fire.
Ákáthasó, the Sky-spirit.
Arahanta, a saint.
Arúpá, immaterial worlds.
Arúpá Nats, formless, incorporeal beings.
Asura, a demon.
Asurakaya, fallen angels.
Asurinda, King of the Titans.
Athúya Nats (Asuras), Titans.
Athúyakhé (Asurakaya), fallen angels.
Athúyén Nat Min (Asurinda), King of the Titans.
Atmá, the soul.

Baliyáza Nat (Bali), Lord of the Infernal Regions.
Balú, an ogre.
Balúmá, an ogress.
Bápaw, a worshipper of flowers.
Bédin (Védánta), Burmese astrology (copying the Indian).
Bédin-sayá, an astrologer.
Bhúmi, a place, state.
Bídagat (Pitakattaya), the Sacred Law.
Bó, a military officer.
Bódaw, a royal military leader.
Bódhi, Bó, the sacred fig-tree.
Bódhisattva, a coming Buddha.
Bón (Bhúmi), place, state, stage, region, seat.
Brahmá, the Creator in the Neo-Brahmanism or Hinduism; a superior angel in Buddhism.
Búmadé, the Guardian of the Earth.
Búmasó, the Earth-spirit.

Chakra, a supernatural weapon; quoit.
Chatummahárájika, the Land of the Four Great Kings.
Chaturmukha, the four-faced.
Chaungzón Nat, the Spirit of the Meeting of the Waters.
Chék pasó, a (male) loin-cloth.
Chénzá, the Book of the Oath.
Chétí, a shrine-model.
Chinthé, a lion (mythological).

Daddáratá Nat Min (Dhatarattha), King of the North.
Dá, a knife, sword.
Dán Maung Shin, the Tree-Nat.
Dáná, charity.
Daukchá, a head-gear containing an image of Buddha.
Daukchá yathé, a class of ascetic with a peculiar head-gear.
Déva, a spirit.
Dévalóka, the Nat-world.
Dhatarattha, King of the North.

En-saung Nat, the House-guardian; House-haunter.

Galón (Garuda), a griffin.
Gandabbá Nat Min (Gandharva), a celestial musician.
Ganja, a hemp intoxicant.

Garápála Nat (Gharapála), the House-guardian.
Garuda, a griffin; supernatural bird.
Gátha, a Pali text.
Gautama (Gaudama, Goddama), Buddha.
Gharapála, the House-guardian.
Gómban Nat Min (Kumbhanda), the Chief of the Demons.
Gyó (Graha), a planet.

Hénthá, the Brahminy goose.
Hmaw-sayá, a wizard.
Hminzá, spirits of children.
Hón, fire.

Indra (Thagyá), the God of the Firmament.
Indráni, Thagyá Nat's wife.

Jaggary, coarse sugar, molasses (an Anglo-Indianism).
Jambu, the sacred tree; *eugenia*.
Jambudípa, the Asiatic Continent.
Jangala, the Recorder.
Jarásandha, the opponent of Krishna.
Jívíta-dáná, life-saving charity.

Kabalwé, a sacred cover (of a book).
Kalá, a native of India.
Kalúk (Talaing), a spirit.
Kalut-letwèdá-hmú, a royal sword-bearer.
Kalyaméttá Nat-thamí (Kalyání), the True Friend.
Káma, Cupid.
Kámá, the pleasures of sense.
Kamá, generating beings.
Kammawá, a Scripture in Pali.
Karma, deed-result; merit.
Kauk-hnyin, sticky rice.
Kaungyé, rice-liquor.
Kazón, May.
Kénnayá (Kinnara), angels.
Khétthapála, the Field-guardian.
Khun, a guardian-spirit.
Khun (? Chin word), founders of a clan.
Kinnara, angels.
Kló (Chin word), the soul.
Kósaung, personal Nats.
Kó Thén Shin, the Supreme Judge of the Chins.
Kumára, the God of War.
Kumbhanda, the Chief of the Demons.
Kúthó, merit.
Kuvéra, the God of Wealth, King of the East.
Kwin, a cultivated patch.
Kyí-pyáthat, a brazen spire.

Lá (Karen word), the soul.
Lawká (Lóka), a world.
Lekkhamí Nat (Lakshmí), the Treasure-guardian.
Léppyá, the butterfly-spirit, the soul.
Limbán, a low table.

Mágayé Nat, the House Spirit.
Mahágíri, the great mountain.
Mahaut (Maháwat), an elephant-driver (Indian).
Mani Méghálawara Nat-thamí, the Rain-goddess.
Mán Nat (Mára), the Evil Principle.
Manókthá (Manussa), man.
Manókthíha (Manussiha), a man-lion.
Mára, the Evil Spirit, Devil.
Methilá, a nun.
Mí Nat (Agni), the God of Fire.
Min Mágayé (Talaing), the King of the Nats.
Mitwe, a soothsayer.
Mó-nat-puzawpwé (Mógha-nátha-púja), the Feast of the Worship of the Lord of the Rain.
Myó-ók, a magistrate, head of a township.
Myóthúgyí, a head-man of a township, or mayor.

Nagá, a serpent.
Nágarít, Cape Negrais.
Nágyí, the Guardian of the Grain.
Narachakshu, the Personal-guardian.
Narindádéva Nat (Sóma), the moon as a god.
Nat, Nat-déwa, a spirit.
Natgyí, chief spirit.
Nat-kadaw, spirit-medium (female), Nat's wife.
Natkun, spirit-shrine.
Natmin, chief spirit.
Nat-ók, ruler of the spirits, a medium.
Nat-saw, a spirit-medium.
Nat-sayá, spirit adept.
Nat-shin Yan-naing, *lit.* lord of spirits; victorious.
Natsén, green-faced spirits of the air; malevolent.
Natsin, spirit-shrine.
Natsingón, spirit-shrine.
Nat-só, an evil spirit.
Nat-thá, a spirit, Nat's son.
Nat-thamí, spirit princess, Nat's daughter.
Nat-than, ode to a spirit.
Nat-thippin, a spirit tree.
Natwun, lord of spirits.
Nayá, a four-legged dragon.
Nayón, June.
Narazat Nat (Narachakshu), the Personal-guardian.
Nébbán (Nirvána), Dissolution, Paradise.
Némmánayadí, the Land of Mára or Mán Nat.
Né Nat (Súriya), the Sun.
Nga Thén (Chin word), the supreme judge.
Ngayé (Niraya), Hell.
Nyaungbin, the Bódhi tree; Bó tree.
Nyaungyé-ó, holy-water vessel.

Oktasaung, female spirits, treasure-guardians.

Parabaik, native paper.
Pasó, a loin-cloth (male).
Payékpan, a holy flower.
Payét (Paritta), a hymn of protection.
Payét-yé, holy water.
Phalásón, a betel-box.
Phayá, the Lord Buddha; also a pagoda.
Phéwan (Shan word), the Sixty Year Cycle.
Pitakattaya, the Sacred Law.
Póngyí, a monk.
Pónná, a Manipúrí Brahman priest; astrologer.
Préta Asurakáya, spirits in torment.
Pyéttá (Préta), ghosts.
Pyétta Athúyaké (Préta Asurakáya), spirits in torment.

Rishi (Yathé), a hermit; ascetic.
Rúpá, corporeal ungenerated beings.

Sagábin, yellow jasmine (*champac*).
Sakra, the God of the Firmament.
Sangha, the Church.
Sankh, a conch shell.
Sayá, a ministrant, teacher, master, doctor.
Sayádaw, an orthodox Buddhist abbot.
Sék (Chakra), a supernatural weapon; quoit.
Sektawyábón, "Buddha's Foot."
Siva, the Destroyer in the neo-Brahmanism or Hinduism.
Skanda, the God of War.
Sóma, the Moon.
Súlarata Nat (Súlé Natgyí), the Guardian of Rangoon.
Súriya, the Sun.

Tabódwé, February.
Talákú (Karen word), a hermit.
Tamén, a petticoat (female).
Tasé, a disembodied spirit; ghost.
Taungyá, jungle-cultivation.
Távatimsá (Trayastrimsa), a heaven.
Táwadénthá (Távatimsá), the Land of the Thirty-three Rulers.
Taw-saung Nat, the jungle-haunting Nat.
Tayéssan (Tiracchána), animals.
Tazaung, a seven-storied building.
Tazaungmón, November.
Thabyé-bin, a tree with a sacred flower; *eugenia*.
Thadingyut, October.
Thadó Minzaw, the celebrated legendary king of Tagaung.
Thagyá, an archangel.

Thagyá Nat (Sakra, Indra), the God of the Firmament.
Thakándá Nat (Skanda, Kumára), the God of War.
Thamódayyá (Samudrá), the ocean.
Thàndawgàn, a secretary.
Thayé (Thabet), spirits of those who have died violent deaths.
Thén, a sanctuary.
Thénggá (Sangha), the Church.
Thingyán, the New Year; the Water-throwing festival at the New Year.
Thippin, a tree.
Thippinsaung (Yakkha), the Tree-guardian.
Thúyakhé (Asurakaya), a demon.
T'í, an umbrella or top covering.
Tipitaka, the Buddhist Scripture proper.
Tiracchána, animals.
Tumsa, a soothsayer.

Uyudaing, a guardian-spirit.

Vámasúra, Cupid.
Varuná Nat Min, the River-Nat.
Vasu, a terrestrial god.
Védánta, astrology.
Vessavana, the God of Wealth.
Virúlaka Nat Min (Virúlhaka), King of the South.
Virúpekka Nat Min (Virupakkha), King of the West.
Vishnu, the Preserver in the neo-Brahmanism or Buddhism.

Wá, the Buddhist Lent.
Wámathúya Nat (Vámasúra, Káma), Cupid.
Wázó, July.
Wéthawún Nat Min (Vessavana, Kuvéra), the Treasure-guardian, King of the East.
Wun, a governor.

Yahán, a monk of a monastery.
Yahándá (Arahanta), a saint.
Yakkha, the Tree-guardian.
Yókkasó, the Tree-spirit.
Yuá-són, the extremity of a village.
Yúzaná (Yójana), a measure of twelve miles.

Zabúdék (Jambudípa), the Asiatic Continent.
Zalathinga Nat (Jarasandha), the opponent of Krishna.
Zambu (Jambu), the sacred tree; *eugenia*.
Zatumahárít (Chatummahárajiká), the Land of the Four Great Kings.
Zayàt, a public rest-house.
Zingala Nat (Jangala), the Recorder.

Manókthiha (Manussiha, Man-lion).





UDAUNG.

The Peacock Emblem of Burma, representing the sun, in gilt spangled work on black cloth *(kulágá)*.



The Kings of the Four Nat Worlds.
1. Táwadénthá Thagyá Min. 2. Yáma Nat Min. 3. Túthitá Nat Min. 4. Némmánayadí Nat Min.

CHAPTER I.

ANIMISM IN BURMA.



NO one can be long in Burma without hearing of the Nats, and every book on the Burmese—from the writings of the most learned scholars and most competent observers to those of the butterflies of literature, who flutter through the country and write about it—contains more or less elaborate and more or less accurate notices of them, and still it has always been, except perhaps to the profounder and therefore least read writers, most difficult to say definitely what the word actually means, or what the Nats are really supposed to be. Perhaps the most nebulous ideas of all on the subject are those of the persons who openly or secretly believe in them, and yet the Nats pervade all Burma and are in one form or another held in awe by all the native population, Burmese or otherwise by descent, whether Buddhist or Pantheistic by faith, whether civilized or savage, whether enlightened so far as Oriental wisdom can teach or entirely ignorant. The subject for study thus opened up is very wide, very complicated, and to the student of anthropology of some importance. It is to the elucidation of one prominent phase of it that I now address myself.

The professed religion of Burma is Buddhism, which means that at the present day it is a combination of the two great schools of that faith, the Mahâyâna or Northern and the Hînayâna or Southern. The Northern, or debased ritualistic, school is that still prevalent in Népál, Bhútán, Tibet, Mongolia, Corea, China and Japan. The Southern, or puritanical school is that which has sway in Ceylon, Burma and Siam. In Burma, however, there is still a perceptible infusion of the Northern ideas, which retained the main features of the original and indeed later Brahmanism, and fell very far away from the lofty ideas of Buddha himself and his immediate successors. Brahmanism may be described as being at bottom a systematised philosophical Animism and its presence in Buddhism has had the effect of preventing the latter faith from killing out the indigenous Animism of the peoples among whom it spread.

In Burma Buddhism has certainly not succeeded in destroying the Animism of the people, for all observers agree that the Burman, despite his now ancient official adoption, after a long fight, of the purest form of Buddhism, is at heart an Animist, his professed faith being little more than "a thin veneer of philosophy laid over the main structure of Animistic belief." In local parlance the Animist of Burma is a Worshipper of the Nats.

The Burmese Animistic worship, *i.e.*, the worship of Spirits or Nats, does not differ in its essentials from similar worship all the world over, and there is no reason to suppose that the innumerable denizens of the

Burmese Spirit-world differ in origin or character from those of the Spirit-world of other peoples. If we accept the theory that in their earliest form "all men's gods are the corpses or ghosts of their ancestors," and that "there are no *prima differentia* between the Spirit that was once a living man and the Spirit that never was human at all," then it may be safely said that the facts of Burmese Nat Worship in its various forms are all in support of it.

No one has ever known the Burmese better than Bishop Bigandet and he has told us that "the Buddhism of the people forms little or no part of their daily life," and that, although every Burman as a boy must go to a monastic school and wear the yellow robe, "in his every-day life, from the day of his birth to his marriage, and even when he lies on his death-bed, all the rites and forms that he observes are to be traced to Animistic and not to Buddhist sources. If calamity overtakes him he considers it to be the work of his Nats, and when he wishes to commence any important undertaking, he propitiates these Nats, who are the direct representatives of the old Animistic worship. Even the *póngyís* [monks] themselves are often directly influenced by the strong under-current of Animistic religion which underlies their faith in Buddhism."

Another most competent observer has said, "To the Burman, and especially to the Upper Burman, Nat-worship is the most important thing. Every monastery has cloths put over the heads of its posts as a covering for the Nats, equally with the house posts, or the supports of a bridge out in the jungle. Spirit-shrines stand close up against pagodas; the monks take part in superstitious rites to secure rain or what not. They are often the most expert tattooers and astrologers and fortune-tellers. The Burman has much more faith in the ascertaining of lucky and unlucky days and in the deductions from his horoscope than in the virtue of alms and the efficacy of worship at the pagoda."

All efforts of the orthodox Buddhists have been powerless to prevent this. King Mindón, a staunch defender of the Buddhist faith and well versed in the Scriptures, used all his enormous power and influence against Nat worship, but in vain, and under the last and learned King, his son Thíbaw, it flourished as vigorously as ever. Sir George Scott puts the Burman's mental attitude in this respect with his usual felicity, "As a simple matter of fact, it is undeniable that the propitiating of the Nats is a question of daily concern to the lower-class Burman, while the worship at the pagoda is only thought of once a week. For the Nat may prove destructive and hostile at any time, whereas the acquisition of *kúthó* [merit] at the pagoda is a thing which may be set about in a business-like way, and at proper and convenient seasons."

Sir George has also further attested the universality of the cult, "At the extremity of every village, the *yuá-són*, there is a *nat-sin*, a shrine for the Nat or Nats of the neighbourhood. This varies very much in size and character. Sometimes it is a mere bamboo cage, hung in a peepul or other tree, or slung on a post, a bird-cage kind of construction, with an image inside, and a little hole through which the superstitious can introduce their offerings, tiny water-pots, oil-lamps, and little morsels of food. Often, if the village is larger, the shrine is much more pretentious, assuming almost the size and appearance of a *zayàt* [public rest-house], a large *tectum* or roof, gabled and supported with red posts, the platform ornamented, and with a daïs at one end, on which a representation of the Nat is placed at feast time, which, in imitation of the pagoda festivals, occurs at a regular fixed season. At other times these images are kept stowed away in an adjoining chamber, built for the purpose. It is particularly irritating to an educated Burman to see these absurd figures, which remind one of nothing so much as the fetishes of the prognathous African."

In Upper Burma, the spirit of Nat-worship pervaded all classes under the Native Rule. Certain feasts were formally recognized by the Burmese Court, and Ministers of State,—even the King, who was the religious as well as the secular chief,—attended them in their official capacity, while the ritual to be observed is carefully set forth in the *Lawka Byúha*, the *Shwé Pónnídan* and other treatises on Court etiquette and duties.

The attitude of the modern upper classes in Burma towards this worship is well shown in a letter to me in 1892 from an educated Burman. He wrote:—"I have to state that Buddhism and Brahmanism have certain beliefs in common, in consequence of stories handed down from father to son. The wild tribes, which have not received the Religion of Gaudama [*i.e.*, Buddhism], are quite as strong in this primitive faith. Not only has every human being, but also every conspicuous object and every article of utility, a guardian spirit. When people die it is said that they become spiritual bodies, requiring spiritual food, and in order that these spirits, or Nats, may not harm the living, the latter make certain customary offerings to them. Some persons, who have familiar spirits, make annual offerings to the Nats, and before making an offering a small bamboo or plank house is built in a grove or near a mountain, wax candles are lighted and minor offerings are made. These festivals are generally performed in Upper Burma. When the ceremonies are over, a pot of water is poured out slowly on to the ground, while repeating certain prayers. During the reign of King Anawratházaw [the great conqueror and Buddhist reformer of the Pagán Dynasty who reigned 1010-1052 A.D.], the people in Pagán worshipped the Nats daily. They used to build a small bamboo structure, called a Nat-house, in front of their own houses and placed offerings in it daily. Whenever the King saw these miserable little Nat-houses, he used to order his officers to destroy them, and had all the figures of the Nats collected into one place and tied together

with chains. The figures of these Nats are still to be found in Pagán, in a cave there. When the people came to learn about the order of the King directing the destruction of their Nat-houses, they obeyed it, but they hung up a cocoanut in their own houses to represent them and as an offering to the dispossessed Nats. The figures of the Thirty-seven Nats are still to be seen near the Nyaung-ú Pagoda at Pagán [in Upper Burma]."

The value of this letter to my mind is that it comes from a native of Burma with a mind untinged with European ideas, who rather neatly betrays his origin to be Talaing by his reference to the cocoanut. The letter puts the whole question very fairly. The Nats are in fact supernatural beings derived from three separate sources. The supernatural beings of the Buddhists, celestial, terrestrial and infernal, derived from the old Brahmanic cosmogony of India. The tutelary spirits that fill the Earth and all that is thereon, man himself and all the creatures, objects and places amongst which he lives and moves and has his being, derived from the ancient animistic pre-Buddhist beliefs of the people. The ghosts and spirits of the departed. Sir G. Scott tells us that no Burman ever mixes up in his mind the different kinds of Nats and keeps the Spirits of Nature (Animistic) always quite distinct from those imported from India (Brahmanic).

Naturally, in such conditions as the above, the child is made to drink in the idea of the Nat in all his forms, Buddhistic, Brahmanic and Animistic, especially the latter, from his very cradle. In the graceful and very human lullaby, so cleverly translated by Sir George Scott in *The Burman*, this is clearly brought out.

"But to make black darkness vanish,
Sweet sleep from my babe's eyes banish,
Fairies wiled him,
Dreams beguiled him,
In his cradle wrapped so snugly,
Cradle carved with *nayás*[1] ugly,
Carved with Nats and Kings and Princes,
Every splendour that evinces
Royal state and princely usance,
There he slept, when what a nuisance!
Comes the light
To affright
And scare him back to home from elfin land.

* * *

Nasty, naughty, noisy baby,
If the cat won't, Nats will maybe
Come and pinch and punch and rend you.

* * *

When little boys
Make such a noise,
Comes the brownie
On wings downy,
Comes the wood sprite.
In the dark night,
Witch and warlock,
Mere and tor-folk,
Kelpie, nikker,
Quicker and quicker,
Gobble all bad babies up.

* * *

Now I'll sing the eighty ditties,[2]
Known in all the royal cities,
Lullabies so soft and drowsy
E'en the Nat-só[3] could not rouse ye."

Irrespective of this, children in the Monasteries are taught as their first "Reader" that very fine old religious Buddhist poem, the *Mangalasutta*, known in Burma as the *Mengaláthók*. Though a celestial being is mentioned, there is nothing about Nats in the magnificent Páli original, but plenty in the Burmese rendering as translated by Sangermano (*Burmese Empire*, p. 104 ff.), about a certain Nat who appeared to Buddha himself. In the Burmese version, the Nat draws from Buddha the celebrated Sermon of the Blessings, of which the Burmese variant follows the Páli *longo intervallo*. In the Burmese every line commences with "O Nat!"

In later life also, there is one custom which serves to perpetuate the Animistic form of the faith of the Burman, and that is the oath he has to take in the Law Courts and on all legal occasions. The ceremony is for the witness or person taking the oath to lift up the *Chénzá*, or Book of the Oath, wrapped in the *kabalwé* or sacred cover, with both hands over the head, and repeat a form of words which implies an imprecation that all the things written in the book may happen to him, if he does not tell the truth. In Lower Burma it has much the same effect as a legal oath taken elsewhere, but in Upper Burma, on our first taking over the country, it had

[1] Four-legged dragon. [2] A very old and well-known palace lullaby. [3] Evil Spirit.

real terrors for the people, and I have known respectable persons terrified at the prospect of having to take it, in case they might inadvertently leave out something they ought to have told, or might state that which was not really the fact. The Book of the Oath covers so much of the Nat-worship of the people that it is here given in its commonest form.

"I will speak the truth. If I should be influenced by the laws of demerits, namely, passion, folly, anger, false opinion, immodesty, pride, scepticism, hard-heartedness, then may all these calamities attend me and my relations, wherever we may be, by land or by water, travelling or remaining quietly at home. May the Nats who guard the sacred heavens, the Athúya Nats [*asuras*, titans] and all other giants, the Nats who guard the three Baskets of the Sacred Law [*Tipitaka*, *Pitakattaya*, *Bídagat*], delivered by the most excellent Buddha, and all the other holy writings and sermons; may the Nats, the guardians of the sacred relics, the holy hairs, the teeth, the jawbone, the frontal bone, and all the other relics; the keepers and warders of countless shrines, all golden and made famous by sacred memories; the protectors of the images and figures of the supreme Buddha; may the Nats who guard the sacred mount and all the hills of the Southern Island; the Nats who watch and ward the mighty rivers, the lesser streams, the lakes, the torrents, cataracts, and whirlpools; the Nats who preside over the vast forests and the single trees; the Nats of the sun, the moon, the stars and meteors, the clouds, winds, mists, and exhalations; may the *nagá* [serpent] and the *galón* [griffin], hideous dragons, and cruel birds, all *balús* [ogres], demons, warlocks, all the evils that come from without the body; may all these spirits and ill things unite to slay me and mine, to the utmost limits of kinship, if I speak not the truth.

"When I and my relations are on land, let all the hideous land creatures, tigers, *balús*, elephants, male and female, demons and giants, buffaloes, poisonous serpents, the cobra, and the hamadryad, the scorpion, and the centipede; may they all seize, bite, crush, strangle, and devour us; may the earth open and swallow us up; a thunderbolt from heaven descend and annihilate us, if I speak not the truth.

"When we travel by water, may our boats sink and be shattered by storms; may crocodiles, writhing snakes, and ravenous fishes, kill and devour us, that we suddenly die, perish, and come to utter destruction, if I speak not the truth.

"May the five calamities, occasioned by fire, water, thieves, governors and enemies oppress us; may we be subject to all the maladies of the body; may we be as fools and idiots, afflicted with madness and leprosy, with all kinds of loathsome disease and evils that deform the body, with itch, scurvy, ulcers, deafness, blindness, dysentery, the plague, and all manner of mental and corporal miseries; may we incur the hatred and punishments of judges and rulers; may we be for ever separated from our forefathers, children, and relations, throughout all succeeding worlds; may fire destroy our goods; lances, swords, arrows, and knives, and all sorts of weapons cut and pierce and maim our bodies; may I die instantly, vomiting up clotted black blood before the assembled people, if I speak not the truth.

"Moreover, if I speak not the truth, may I and all my family after death be instantly cast into the abyss of hell, there to wander for a cycle of worlds through the eight great hells and all the smaller ones, suffering all the torments of these places; and when at length I shall emerge thence, may I become a *pyéttá* [ghost], or a *thúyaké* [*asurakhaya*, demon], and thereafter some hideous animal, passing through all the wretchedness of the four states of punishment. Finally, when after innumerable worlds I shall at length once more become man, may I be the slave of other men a hundred and a thousand times, if I speak not now the truth.

"But if I speak truth, may I and all my relations escape the three calamities; may all the ills in the body and all that are without the body keep far away; may our wealth, honour, and estimation ever increase, and when we die may we attain the happiness of men and *dévas* [spirits], and speedily entering on the noble path, reach the cloudless peace of Nébbán."

Shwébyingyí Nat (No. 25) invoking Ngágyaung-tagá Nat (No. 11).





Inhabitants of the Higher Heavens.

1. Atappá (Atappa). 2. Thubakénná (Subhakinná). 3. Appamánábá (Appamánábhá). 4. Byammápayéthitsa (Brahmapárisajja).

CHAPTER II.

BRAHMANIC AND BUDDHISTIC INFLUENCE.



ALTHOUGH the influence of the Buddhist religion, in its Northern or, in Burma, unreformed shape, or in its Southern or reformed shape, is everywhere visible, Indian influence on Nat worship is not so great in that phase of it which can be recognised as of Indian origin as might be supposed. The older Brahmanic faith out of which Buddhism sprang as a popular reform, had its *dévas* or gods, its *asuras* or demons, and its *vasus* or terrestrial gods, whom many writers distinguish as godlings, and though these have in a sense been taken over bodily by Buddhism as "angels," yet in their translation to Burma they have become nationalised and their names, and the ideas and stories connected with them, are eminently of the people. It has been well said that the Burmese Nat Pantheon is much more Greek or Scandinavian in form than Indian, with this difference, that the elucidation in their case has been the work of the farmer, in that of the Greeks of the poet, and in that of the Scandinavians of the viking.

The underlying cause of the worship of these imported Spirits is fear. Their attribute is power, their *raison d'être* is absolute domination over human aspirations. Their worship is propitiation, so that they may be induced to fulfil human wishes. They may in some aspects be compared with the patron saints of the Christian nations. And all this is indigenous. At any rate it is pre-Buddhistic, as it is sheer fear that animates what may be called the religious practices of the wild tribes of the country.

The overwhelming character of the Animistic influence on Brahmanic traditions is to be seen in the very popular legend connected with Thadónáganaing,—Thadó, the Conqueror of the Serpents. His is essentially a Brahmanic legend of the very early Burmese "historical" times, and the mythical foundation of Prome in the fifth century B.C. is attributed to his grandson. He is still credited with having procured his demoniacal powers in Northern India. In his honour the three famous pagodas in the defile of the Irrawaddy between Mandalay and Bhamo are said to have been erected. His ancient capital was Tagaung on the Irrawaddy banks, and to-day his cult has been thus described :—"A still more dreaded spirit is one whose representation figures in a shrine at Tagaung, one of the ancient capitals of the country, half way between Mandalay and Bhamo. He appears simply as a head on a post, four feet high or thereabouts. A spire-like crown rests on his head, his eyes protrude and goggle in semi-globular wrath, asinine ears and a Punch-like nose complete the likeness, for he has no mouth, and his body is that of a dragon. Every one avoids his temple as much as possible, but the inhabitants of the village bow in that direction before they venture to do anything, and passing boatmen kindle lamps and offer flowers, of which he is said to be particularly fond, and fruit, for the Nat has an incorrigible habit of giving people the stomach-ache when he is offended, and death punishes the recalcitrant. 'Tagaung colic' is a recognised ailment with the Burmese faculty."

Sangermano, the first great enquirer (1782-1819) into things Burmese, gives, in Chapter III. of his *Description of the Burmese Empire*, what may be called the orthodox view of "the beings that live in the world." This is merely a version of Buddhist metaphysics imported straight into Burma among the literate and learned. Indeed, but for the strange forms that the Páli technical terms have taken on in their passage into Burma, one might be reading a book on ancient Indian Buddhist philosophy, representing that form of the old Brahmanic cosmogony which the Burmese affected. Here the Nat is merely the Buddho-Brahmanic *déva*, properly a superhuman being belonging to various classes or orders, but also be it remembered the guardian spirit of a town and family, the genius of a locality, rock, tree, cloud and so on. The transition, in fact, from the imported *déva* to the indigenous Nat is hardly perceptible. One can hardly wonder, then, at the translation of *déva* by *nat* having become at once universal.

In the orthodox view the *déva* or *nat* is a being living a life of happiness, exempt from the ills of humanity, but subject to the pleasures of sense. Officially the Kings of Burma have not died, but have passed to the happy state of the Nat. These beings occupy six heavens increasing in remoteness from sensual pleasure as they recede from the earth. The nearest is Zatumahárít which is Chatumáhárajika, the Land of the Four Kings, inhabited by genii. Next follows Táwadéntha, or Távatimsa, the Abode of the Thirty Three, where dwell the ruling spirits that interfere with mankind, now called the Thirty Seven Nats.

The Burmese, like the Indian, books are not equal to describing the heavens beyond these in detail and the inference is pretty clear that both peoples were interested only in gaining Buddhistic sanction to their indigenous worship of the purely animistic genii common to both, and indeed to all the wild world, and of the superior gods which both recognised as something higher than the genii.

The very small chance that Buddhistic teaching had of ousting the Animism, or indeed of not being itself so materially affected by it as we have seen to be the case, becomes apparent from a study of the current orthodox form of the legend of the life of Gautama (Burmese, Gaudama), *i.e.*, of Buddha himself. Every phase, every story, and almost every page of the Burmese MS. version of the legend is alive with the ideas involved in Animistic faith. But the stories in the Burmese legend are, many of them almost word for word, those current in the original Indian Páli legends, and therefore the Burmese legend is, in fact, nothing more than the Buddho-Brahmanic legend of India with an indigenous Burmese cast.

Bigandet's *Life and Legend of Gaudama* is in reality an excerpted translation, with notes and additions, of a Burmese MS. called the *Tathágata-udána*, which may be rendered by "Praise of Buddha," and purports to contain an account of his doings on earth. Its value in the present connection is that it gives the Burmese version of the Life of Buddha and contains within its pages the orthodox Burmese view of the supernatural worlds. In this work we have, at the very commencement, the old Buddho-Brahmanic spirit-worship in its Burmanised form, and so onwards throughout its pages. Writes the Burmese author, "I undertake to translate from the Páli text the history of the most excellent Phayá [*i.e.*, the Lord, Buddha] from the period he left Tusitá, the fourth abode of Nats, to the time he entered into the state of Nébbán [*nirvána*]." In Buddhism, Tusitá is the fourth of the six *dévalókas*, worlds of *dévas* or angels, receding in a series from the earth, and we here see clearly that to the inhabitants of the Burmese monasteries the Buddhist *déva* corresponded to their indigenous *nat*. The above quotation follows on words included in the opening invocation, which should be purely Buddhist if anything should be:—"I adore the Law, which the most excellent Buddha has published, which is infinitely high and incomparably profound, exceedingly acceptable, and most earnestly wished for by Nats and men, capable of wiping off the stains of concupiscence, and is immutable."

The orders of beings, too, are throughout described or assumed as being three, Brahmás, Nats and men. The Brahmá of Buddhism is strictly the highest order of angel, free from sensual passion and insensible to heat and cold, so that we have here the conception of men, *nats* or superior men, and Brahmás or superior *nats*. In common parlance a Brahmá is a Byammá Nat. And lastly, the whole ideas of the Buddhist nether worlds and the hells and the infernal judges correspond, from the general point of view, so closely with the indigenous one that it is no wonder that they have been imported bodily into the inherent Animism of the country.

Though of course, as the Burmese legend of Gaudama purports to be a rendering of the Indian, the Nats mentioned so frequently in it belong by nature mostly to the Buddhistic cosmogony, yet even here the Animistic apprehension of the supernatural is involved in the belief in these spirits. Witness the following tale, which is redolent of the spirit both of Burmese Animism and of the pre-Buddhistic Brahmanism in India. It is the favourite story of the female disciple Thúzatá (Sujátá), who upon bearing a son "was preparing to make her grateful offering to the Nat of the place. She had been keeping one thousand cows in a place abounding with sweet vines; the milk of that thousand was given to five hundred cows; these again fed with their own milk two hundred and fifty others, and so on, in a diminishing proportion, until it happened that sixteen cows fed eight others with their milk. So these eight cows gave a milk, rich, sweet, and flavoured beyond all description. On the day of the full moon of Kazón [May], Thúzatá rose at an early hour to make ready her offering, and arranged

that the cows should be simultaneously milked. When they were to be milked, the young calves of their own accord kept at a distance; and as soon as the vessels were brought near, the milk began to flow in streams from the udders into the vessels. She took the milk and poured it into a large cauldron, set on a fire which she had herself kindled. The milk began to boil; bubbles formed on the surface of the liquid, turned to the right and sunk down, not a single drop being spilt; no smoke arose from the fireplace. Four kings of Nats watched while the cauldron was boiling; the great Brahmá kept open an umbrella over it; Thagyá brought fuel and fed the fire. Other Nats, by their supernatural power, infused honey into the milk, and communicated thereto a flavour, such as the like is not to be found in the abode of men." The value put on milk and the virtue of keeping cows are of course pure Brahmanism, but the direct Indian influence observable here is still more to be noticed in the fact that, under the Burmese Kings, gamblers, drunkards, cow-butchers, and those convicted of habitually eating beef were proclaimed by beat of gong at all the cross-roads of the capital as malefactors.

What follows in the legend about Sujátá (nowadays the consort of Sakra, or Thagyá Nat, in the Távatimsa Heaven), is even more important, because this was the culminating point in Buddha's career as a man, for it was the occasion of his attaining Nirvána. He had "the Five Dreams" and these made him sit down under a *nyaungbin* (Bódhi Tree, Bó Tree). His effulgence there made Sujátá consider that "of course the Nat had come down from the tree to receive the offering with his own hands." Mistaking Buddha (as Bódhisattva or Coming Buddha) for a Nat, she offered him the golden cup, which was the sign, indeed, of his Buddhaship, and said "My Lord Nat, I beg to offer you this food together with the vessel that contains it." The Bódhisattva, understanding what the portent meant, takes the cup and throws it, after spending forty-nine days under the Bódhi tree, into a river, where it floats upstream until it sinks into a whirlpool. There it "went down to the country of the Nagás [Serpents] and made a noise on coming in contact with and striking against the three vessels of the three last Buddhas, *viz.*, Kaukathan, Gaunagón and Kathaba [Kakusandha, Kónagamana and Kassapa]. On hearing this unusual noise, the chief of the Nagás awoke from his sleep, and said: 'How is this? Yesterday, a Buddha appeared in the world; to-day, again, there is another.' And in more than one hundred stanzas he sung praises to Buddha." So the actual passing of the Bódhisattva into the Buddha was accompanied by his being mistaken for a tree spirit or *nat*, and by his sacred cup going to the country of the *nagás* or serpents. All of which is worthy of attention in view of the effect that the Burmese Legend of Gaudama is likely to have on an indigenous Animistic faith.

But this is not all, for in a still more remarkable tale of an event purporting to have happened in Jétavana [Burmese, Zédawun] Monastery, when Buddha's great follower Ananta [Burmese, Ananda] was tempted to return to his home and the bride, Zanapadá, he had left behind him, "Buddha took Ananda by the arm, rose with him in the air, and led him in the direction of the Nats' seat of Táwadéntha. On their way, Buddha, by a miraculous process, exhibited to the eyes of his companion the sight of an immense forest in conflagration. On the burnt stump of a tree, he showed him a female monkey horribly mutilated, having her tail, ears, and nose cut off. At such a sight the horrified Ananda turned away his eyes in disgust. A little while after this, Buddha exhibited before him the dazzling and heart-captivating sight of a long array of five hundred matchless beauties. They were daughters of Nats going to pay their respects to the great Thagyá. Ananda was gazing at them with silent but enraptured feelings. Buddha said to him: 'Do you believe those beauties before you to be equal to Zanapadá?' 'She is no more to these perfect forms,' answered he, 'than the bleeding female monkey we have left behind us is to her.' 'All these celestial damsels,' said Buddha, 'I shall give to you, provided you agree to remain in the monastery for some years longer.' 'Willingly do I accept the proposal,' replied Ananda; 'I will stay cheerfully in the monastery on such favourable terms.' Whereupon both returned to the monastery." Now here we have some very direct doctrine indeed, something very like the material Muhammadan heaven and its *húrís*, and more like it in this respect than anything that has been as yet gathered of the belief of the indigenous wild tribes of the country.

It might be objected that this "Legend of Buddha" is merely a concoction from his Páli books of an isolated monk, but its general spirit and its acceptance as a matter of universal knowledge is attested by the Póúdaung Inscription near Prome, from which the following passages are worth quoting:—"In his last birth, he became the son of Suddhódana, King of Kapila, by Queen Máyá. His birth took place in a delightful grove of *sál* trees, and when he grew up, he was surrounded by comforts and pleasures befitting a prince. Three palaces were built for him, to be occupied according to the three seasons. His wife was Yasódhará, and he had a number of concubines. At the age of twenty-nine he renounced the world and became an ascetic. After undergoing penance for six years, he, one night, dreamt five dreams. Next morning, he became a Buddha, and received an offering of rice-milk from Sujátá, which he, with relish, ate, while sitting cross-legged on the bank of a river [Néranjara]. On the evening of the same day, the *dévas* directed his steps to the spot where the Bódhi tree was. This tree had sprouted forth from the earth simultaneously with his birth, and is worthy of veneration by all *dévas* and men. Here, the grass-cutter Suddhiya presented him with eight handfuls of grass, with which he

prepared a seat for himself. While remaining under the Bódhi tree, he was assailed by Mára [the Evil Spirit, Devil] and his hosts on every side: on his right and his left, behind him, in front of him, and over him. The contest, however, could not last long. On the evening of the same day, he merged forth victorious from the struggle and became free from every passion and tie. At dawn on the following day, he comprehended the Four Sublime Truths and attained Buddhahood. The news of this victory and of this attainment was received by the inhabitants of the three *lókas* [worlds] with deafening acclamation." While of the King, Sinbyúshin (1763-1776 A.D.), under whom the inscription was engraved in 1774, it is said, "The King observing that the pagoda erected by his ancestors on that hill would not last for ever, resolved to replace it by another, which would last throughout the 5000 years allotted by Buddha for the continuance of the Religion, and which would be an object of adoration by all men. As he was possessed of such might and power as to cause the consummation of his wishes by the co-operation of the Nats, who watch over the Religion, and by Sakra and other Nats, the *t'i* of the Digón Sandawshin [umbrella or top-covering of the Shwé Dagón Pagoda at Rangoon] was brought away by Sakra and the Nats for the purpose of being enshrined together with images, *chétís* [shrine-models], bone-relics, and hair-relics."

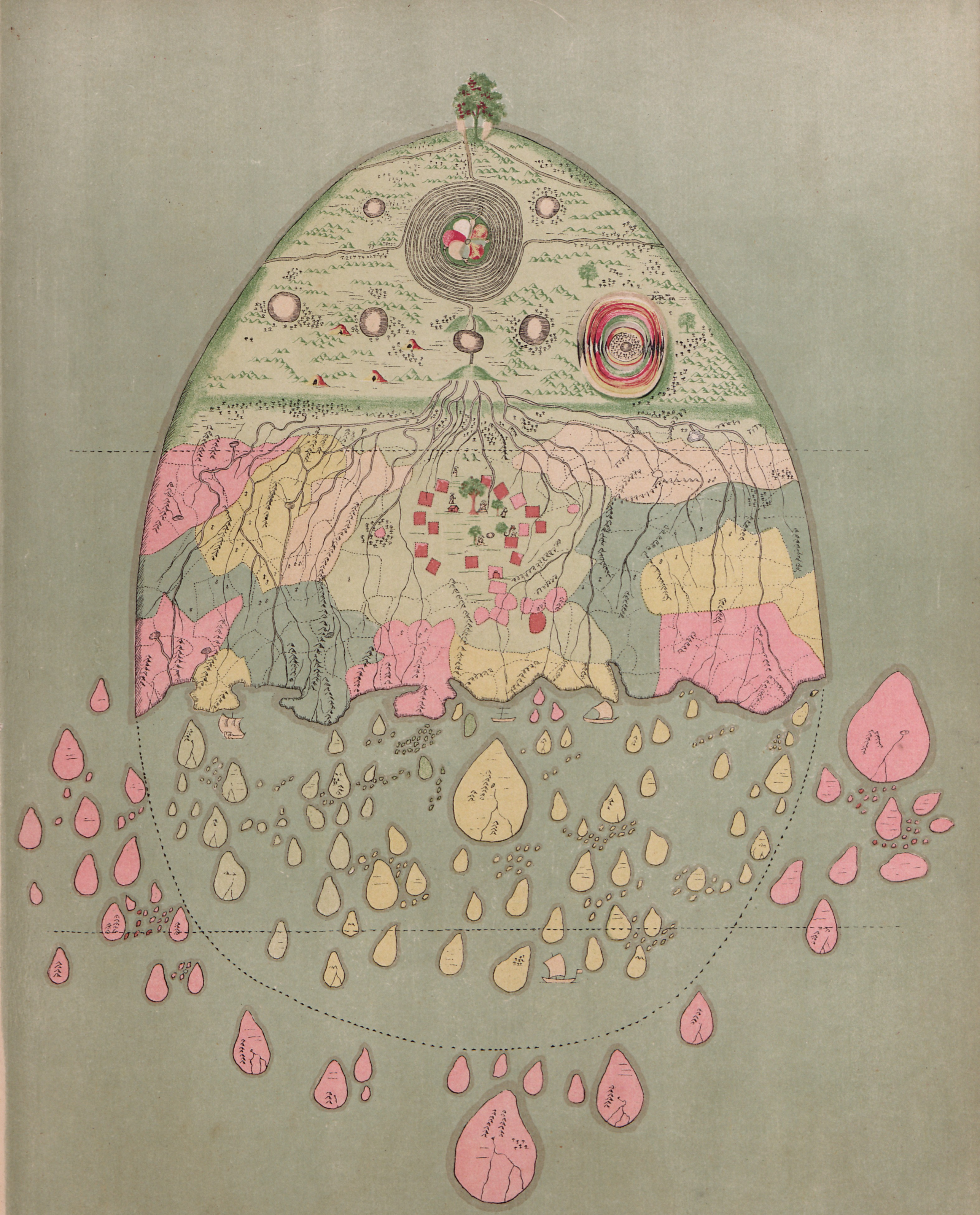
The most popular Buddhistic legend in Burma and perhaps the best known is the *Wéthandayá Zat*, representing the Páli *Vessantara Játaka*. It is frequently played everywhere in the Burmese "theatre," and the scenes from it are not only known by heart generally, but are to be seen depicted in wood carving, in black and gold lacquer and in pictures, everywhere. It is part of the life of the people nowadays and in it the imported half Indian and half indigenous Nat, in all his aspects, is just as much in evidence as in the "Legend of Buddha" just explained.

These considerations lead us naturally to the term Nat:—What is it? One is greatly tempted to derive it at once from the Indian Nátha, especially in view of the probability that before the advent of Indian culture there was no generic term for a "spirit" and that *nátha* means all that *nat* does, a protector, saviour, lord, master, chief, and has in India both a lofty and a humble application, both to the mightiest of the gods and the lowest of the godlings or superhuman heroes. In the Páli scriptures it is a frequent epithet of Buddha himself. Also it might well be argued that the Burmese borrowed it as a designation for the thirty-three angel-inhabitants of the Távatimsa (Táwadéntha) Heaven, who are now represented by the Thirty-seven Nats, the Nats *par excellence*, the innumerable remainder, the *tasé*, etc., being merely hangers-on, as it were. Yet I fear that in this controversy, in the absence of better proofs than are at present attainable, I must side with that best of native observers and writers, Taw Sein Ko, who holds that "probably the word is indigenous, and the phonetic resemblance, though striking, is purely accidental." Nat is, in fact, some indigenous Central Asian or Far Eastern term that has superseded the imported *déva*, because of its happening to exactly translate it, so far as the Burmese are concerned.

An ancient form of Nat worship in Upper Burma was that of the Nagá or Serpent, which was traditionally the religion of Pagán overthrown by the great conqueror Anawrathá in 1048 A.D. But although the Nagá appears in almost every chronicle of the Burmese, both in male and female form, and was more than probably, as we find it, a direct importation of the Nága of India, there is nothing in the cult or legends, so far as known, to distinguish the Nagá from the Nat in practice. This worship was merely another form of the common Animism of the country. If we accept the position that, in Burma, Nagá-worship is older than the days of Anawrathá, we must accept it as a remnant of the Northern Buddhism before the date of his Southern reform in the eleventh century A.D., and long before that second great Southern reform of the fifteenth century, which now forms the basis of the existing Buddhism of the country. There are many traces of this old Buddhism throughout Burma and among them is the word *pyéttá* for a "haunting ghost." The whole modern idea of the *pyéttá* is Buddhist, rather than Brahmanic. In Burmese it is spelt *pritta*, and pronounced correctly *prêttá* and vulgarly *pyéttá*, and it is thus Sanskrit and not Páli, in which the corresponding form is *péta*. It is therefore of Northern and not of Southern Buddhistic origin.

The Executioners of Hell, Ngayémin.
1. Yamadá. 2. Yamaká. 3. Yamahlá. 4. Yamamin.





A Burmese Map of the World, showing traces of Mediæval European Map-making.

The World according to the Burmese.

The Burmese have adapted the cosmography of the Indian Brahmans, through Buddhism and with the modifications which the natural surroundings of their own land suggested.

Lawká (*lóka*), or the World, is conceived as consisting of four great islands situated in space and all alike. Each of these islands is flat and is bounded by a very high range of mountains called Sakyáwalá (Sanskrit, Chakravála). The island which is inhabited by the human beings known to the Burmans is believed to be the southernmost and is named Zambúdék (Pali, Jambúdípa). It really represents the south-eastern portion of the Asiatic Continent and derives its name from the *zambú* (*jambú: eugenia*, usually known to Burmans as *thabyé*) tree, which is supposed to be its distinctive product.

The native map shows Zambúdék with the *zambú* tree on its top or northern end. The continental portion of Zambúdék is shown as being surrounded by the Sakyáwalá Range and cut across by the Himawun (Himavanta or Himálaya). The Himalayas form the Fairyland of the Burmans, on and beyond which to the north everything is marvellous. Here are the seven great lakes, including Anawdat (Anótatta) in the centre, where grows the lotus and whence spring all the great rivers, after forming concentric rings round it. Here also is the jewelled Myinmódaung (Mt. Méru) with the seven rings of mountains round it.

Below the Himalayan line lies the world inhabited by all the human beings of whom the Burmese have any experience, with the sacred Bó Tree and the sites in the Buddhist Holy Land in the centre. These are quaintly shown by small red squares and circular patches, about and south of the holy trees.

To the south of everything lies the Ocean, Thamóddayá (Sanskrit Samudrá), studded with the 500 lesser islands attached to Zambúdék, on which dwell the inferior peoples that come from across the sea. The roughness of the oceans that divide the great islands prevent communication between them, and so all people from over the sea, including Europeans, must come from one of the little islands that belong to Zambúdék, on the continental part of which the Burmans and the other Oriental races dwell.

It is interesting to note that all this is "natural" geography. All the seas known to the Burmans are to the South, and the land of great mountains is chiefly to the North and also to the East and West of them. And beyond these dwell people who are marvellous to them, at any rate by hearsay.

As to the form of the map. It is an attempt to copy a coloured European map of the 17th century, as is shown by the method of indicating mountains and rivers especially, and also of depicting men, animals and ships. Perhaps the most interesting point in the copying is the use of the colours for dividing off the different countries and the dotted lines for their apparent subdivisional boundaries, while in fact no countries are named or meant. The compiler has even gone so far as to represent the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn without having any idea as to the meaning of either expression.



Supernatural Beings.

1. Nagá Min, the Serpent. 2. Galón Min (Garuda), the Griffin. 3. A Balú or Ogre, Gómbán Nat Min (Kumbhanda, Chief of the Demons). 4. A Balú or Ogre, Yekkaik Nat Min (Rákshasa, an Ogre).

CHAPTER III.

ANIMISM AMONG THE BURMESE.



IT is well to give a brief outline of the indigenous Animistic belief of the Burmese in relation to mankind before proceeding to discuss that in regard to the spirit-world.

Man is regarded as consisting of two component parts, body and soul. The soul is his *léppyá* or butterfly-spirit, called *lá* by the Karens and *kló* by the Chins. This soul can leave the body in sleep or illness and can be recaptured. At death the souls go to the world beneath the earth, where their judge, called Nga Thén by the Chins, sits, watched by his dog, under the Tree of Forgetfulness, where they forget all their past experiences and are unable to recall them on re-birth. The good are sent to a heaven, the wicked to a hell. The way to the nether world is by a ferry over a stream; a toll has to be paid and provisions are necessary.

This is the almost universal Animistic faith of the world, but its diametric opposition to the true philosophical Buddhist faith is of importance in the present enquiry. According to Buddhism, there is no soul or *átmá*, and "when a person dies, his *karma* or deed-result survives him, and serves as a nucleus of his next existence. But according to the indigenous faith of the Burmese people, the *léppyá* or butterfly-spirit survives after death, and either lives on as a disembodied spirit in happiness or misery, or is again re-incarnated to continue its course of existence in the flesh."

The general idea of the Burmese as to their purely Animistic spirits has been well put by Taw Sein Ko, the chief living authority on all matters connected with the practical religion of the people. He says, "*Tasé* is the generic term applied to all disembodied spirits which existed as human beings. The *hminzá* are spirits of children, who assume the appearance of cats and dogs. The *thayé* and *thabet* are spirits of those who died violent deaths, or of women who died in childbirth, or of those who lived wicked and sinful lives. These spirits are inimical to mankind, and are represented in folk-lore stories as having hideous bodies, as big as those of a giant, and with long, huge, slimy tongues, which they could make use of as the elephant would his trunk. They are bloodthirsty and their special delight is to cause the death of human beings. Female spirits, who are in charge of treasure buried in the earth, are called *óktazaung*. All these spirits, with the exception of the last, are believed to roam about the haunts of men at sunset in search of their prey, and to be specially active in their peregrinations in times of an epidemic, as cholera or small-pox. They are, therefore, frightened off during epidemics by making a tremendous jarring noise by beating anything that might come in one's way, as the walls and doors of houses, tin kettles, metal trays, cymbals, &c. These evil spirits are sometimes said to enter the bodies of alligators or tigers, and to incite them to cause great destruction of human life." All of which beliefs are more or less common to the Animism of any part of the world at any period observable by the modern student.

The family spirit or house Nat of the Burmese is a true guardian spirit, and under his guardianship every child is ceremonially placed on the seventh day after birth, and he is always propitiated at marriages. Evidence is not wanting to show that he was originally an ancestor, for Taw Sein Ko tells us that "in such of the households in Burma as are tenacious of the observance of the faith and practices of their forefathers, the charred bones of parents and grandparents are carefully preserved in cases of glass, and daily offerings of rice and other eatables are placed before them, in the same manner as before the images of Buddha. At the time of the British occupation of Mandalay in 1885, a number of gold images, representing the kings and chief queens of the Alompra dynasty, were found in the palace, together with a book of odes chanted whenever they were worshipped. [They were for two years in the charge of the present writer.] This form of worship finds an exact counterpart in the Mongol worship, as good deities, of the *manes* of Chingiz Khán and his family." So also, "in the houses of some Burmese families, cocoa-nuts, with a fillet of white muslin or red cloth tied round them, are suspended by a cane support from a special post called the *uyudaing*. The Burmans have forgotten the origin of *uyu*, but the word, or its synonym *khun*, is still used in the Chin language to signify the guardian spirit of a family."

Such are the considerations that have caused it to be generally recognised by students of things Burmese, that the local Nat or representative of the true Animistic spirit,—what Grant Allen, in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, calls "the unknown or generalised ghost,"—really is a mere ghost rather than a heathen deity. His ubiquity is beyond doubt, from the most secluded hill to the most populous, civilised and socially lofty centre.

The tales connected with these Nats are often just such ghost stories as one is familiar with in Christian Europe and in any part of India. As an example we may take the following from a *Revenue Settlement Report* of the highly civilised and populous Mandalay District, made in the year 1893, it being remembered that a Burmese house is so constructed that it cannot well be haunted, and so the haunting goes on in the fields outside.

"There is a considerable body of evidence, which goes to prove that field number 105 of the Kannizá *kwin* [cultivated patch] is under the guardianship of *nats*, *balús*, *pyéttás*, or of some form or other of disembodied spirits. No man has within human memory taken the produce of holdings in it without bringing grievous calamity on himself, or on his wife and family, or even been able for more than one season to use the produce of the land at all. Recent instances of this are numerous. One U Win cultivated the holding about 1878, but, walking past the place one night, he saw what he fancied to be a black pig eating his crops. He pursued the pig and arrived within a few paces of it, when it suddenly swelled into an enormous black shadowy form. U Win was so terrified that he took to his bed and died before morning.

"U Win's successor was Maung Myézú, who died of fever less than a year after he had begun to work the land. Maung Lugyí was then foolhardy enough to try his luck, but his wife died before he got so much as one season's crop, and he fled in terror. Maung Lugyí was followed by Maung Lun, who was scared away by a white apparition, which rushed at him one night out of the neighbouring Lémyet-hná Pagoda. Maung Lun's sense of contrition was such that he forthwith became a *póngyí* [monk] and thus escaped imminent destruction. Maung Aw and his wife Má E next volunteered in 1888; husband and wife both died within the year. Maung Aw was succeeded by one Maung Shwé Baw, who was in 1891 mauled by a leopard and died within one year of the date of his taking over the holding. The leopard was subsequently shot by Myó-ok [magistrate] U Pó Shwé, but the holding has remained fallow since the death of Shwé Baw in 1891. Here is, at any rate, a remarkable series of coincidences, every one of which has happened within the last thirty years and is vouched for by the most respectable men of the village.

"As to the Min Nyí-naung Nat-sin,[1] the Nat Thippin,[2] and many other places, it is well known that if any man, whatever be his social position, approaches them in an irreverent and mocking spirit he will be stricken with headache, fever, or insanity. This is 'proved' by instances innumerable.

"There are certain holdings in the Nánmadawzá *kwin*, which bring sure death to the cultivator and his cattle. The first cultivator of one of these holdings was a Manipúrí immigrant, U Pawnéyán, who, by charms or otherwise, extracted good crops from the holding. After the death of U Pawnéyán, his successor was watching the autumn floods subside, when he heard, as it were, the roaring of a whirlpool, and a large wooden *limbán* [low table] floated to his feet. He picked it up and was cleaning it with the intention of using it, when it suddenly slipped out of his hands and plunging into the water disappeared for ever. Since then the field has yielded only the most meagre crops and caused certain death to the cultivator and his cattle. Another marvel is related by Maung Thé, a respectable old resident of the adjoining village of Thayetkán. While a cultivator was ploughing the field now called Kyauktaing Lé [the Field of the Stone Pillar] in the early morning, his ploughshare struck a stone pillar embedded in the ground. All the neighbours were called to see the stone, and they at once per-

[1] The shrine of the Shwébyin Brothers, two favourites among the Thirty-Seven Nats, of whom more anon.

[2] A "Tree haunted by a Nat."

ceived a miracle, as the field had been ploughed for many years and no large stones had previously been turned up. In the first place, the alluvial nature of the soil rendered it impossible that there could be any large stones there without human or superhuman intervention. Then the distance, over a mile, from any village, was against the probability of any one having placed the stone there. The inference was obvious, and the villagers at once threw up a small embankment round the spot to keep it sacred. They then ate their breakfast and smoked cheroots, after which one of them suggested that they might have another look at the pillar. But the pillar had vanished while they had been eating and smoking within a few yards of it! One of the last men to work the holding was Maung San Waing in King Mindón's time [1852-1878], and his premature death has deterred other villagers from cultivating the field. Another part of the *kwin* was worked only a few years ago by one Maung Tayók, whose buffaloes died and whose crops failed, and he had finally to migrate to Lower Burma, leaving nothing behind him but a few debts. It is said that when the annual floods from the Irrawaddy rise over a certain portion of the tract, the waters are troubled and, as if from winds blowing in contrary directions, small waves rise, which beat and clap against each other like game-cocks fighting. All these disasters and preternatural manifestations are the results of strong efforts made by disembodied spirits to show that their power still exists and must be respected in certain localities. Many hundreds of these tales are narrated in good faith and with perfect gravity."

The Animistic spirit that pervades the cult of the Nat has been well put by Sir George Scott, who says that there is an abundance of Nats to be found "away from villages and houses, and all of them equally ready to resent any injury which the passer-by may unwittingly do them. When a Burman starts on a journey he hangs a bunch of plantains, or a twig of the *thabyé* tree, on the pole of the buffalo cart or the stern of the boat, to conciliate any spirit whose beat he may intrude upon. The fisherman makes offerings in his *nat-sin* [spirit shrine] every time he launches his dugout; the lonely hunter in the forest deposits some rice and ties together a few leaves whenever he comes across some particularly large and imposing tree, lest there might be a Thippin-saung [a tree-haunting] Nat dwelling there. Should there be none, the tied-back twigs will at any rate stand in evidence to the Taw-saung [jungle-haunting] Nat, the demon who presides over all the forest. When there is a boat race, the opposing crews have a preliminary row over the course, with offerings placed on the prow, for the Nat who guards that stretch of the river. And so on through numberless examples. Some Nats achieve fame, and are known far and wide by special appellations. Such is Maung Ingyí, a spirit who is feared in all the districts round Rangoon, and away eastward and northward as far as Pegu. He lives in the water, and causes death. A special festival is celebrated in his honour, or rather in deprecation, in the month of Wázó [July], in which 'Lent' begins. Others, more especially known in Upper Burma, are Byindón, Shwé Byingyí and his brother,[1] and a drunkard Nat called Maung Mingyaw,[2] to whom great quantities of rice spirit are offered. U Yingyí is a spirit universally known among the Talaings. The chief spirit of a district usually goes by the name of Ashingyí, the Great Lord, or, among the Talaings, Okkayá. Then there are generic names; there is the Hmin Nat who lives in woods, and shakes those he meets so that they go mad. There is the U Paká, who flies about in the clouds to spy out men whom he may snap up. There is the Akáthasó who lives in the tops of trees, Yókkasó who lives in the trunk, and Búmasó who is content with a dwelling in the roots. The presence of spirits or witches in trees may always be ascertained by the quivering and trembling of the leaves when all around are still."

In support of Sir George Scott's remarks, from Taw Sein Ko (*Ninth International Congress of Orientalists*, p. 183) we have the following story:—"At Thatón, the ancient centre of Talaing civilisation in Lower Burma, there is a temple dedicated to a Nat called P'ó-p'ó, Grandfather. Tradition, which is in this case *primâ facie* palpably false, says that when this Nat was a human being, he was charged by Sona and Uttara, the Buddhist missionaries who visited Rámañňadésa [roughly Lower Burma] in the third century B.C., to safeguard Thatón against the attacks of Balús, or fierce monsters. The image of P'ó-p'ó represents an old man of about sixty years, sitting cross-legged, with a white fillet on the head, and a moustache and pointed beard. The forehead is broad, and the face bears an intelligent expression. The upper portion of the body is nude, and the lower is dressed in a *chék pasó*, or loin-cloth of the zigzag pattern, so much prized by the people of Burma. The right hand rests on the right knee, and the left is in the act of counting the beads of a rosary. The height of the figure is about five feet. In the apartment on the left of P'ó-p'ó is an image representing a benign-looking *wun* or governor in full official dress. Facing the second image, in a separate apartment, is the representation of a wild, fierce-looking *bó*, or military officer in uniform. The fourth apartment, on the left of the *bó*, is dedicated to a female Nat, who is presumably the wife of P'ó-p'ó, but there is no image representing her. These images are

[1] The story of the Shwébyin Brothers will be found in Chapter XIII.

[2] This is Minye Aungdin Nat, one of the Thirty-Seven Nats, for whom see Chapter XII.

most probably representations of a Burmese governor and his family, whose acts of justice, benevolence, and sympathy were long remembered by the people, and in whose honour these were erected as a mark of esteem, admiration, and reverence. The images are in a good state of preservation, as they are in the custody of a medium who gains a comfortable livelihood. An annual festival, which is largely attended, is held in their honour. It is a strange coincidence that, as in India and Ceylon, these shrines are held in veneration by various nationalities professing different creeds," which, it may be remarked, is the surest sign of the presence of an indigenous Animism in any given form of worship.

And again he tells us that "After the harvest-time of each year, *i.e.*, say about March or April, festivals in honour of Nats as well as of pagodas are held. The Nat festivals are exceedingly popular, and are largely attended by the people. Those at Pagán, Amarapúra, Mandalay, and Lower Chindwin in Upper Burma are ancient and recognised institutions, which used to be supported by the royal bounty of the Burmese kings. In Lower Burma, however, which is inhabited chiefly by people of the Talaing race, Nat festivals have in a large measure been replaced by pagoda festivals, because of the long subjection of the country to Burmese rule, and because of the successful measures adopted by the Burmans for obliterating the nationality of the Talaings, and for making them merge into that of their conquerors."

Many years ago, the present writer was investigating the local ghost tales (and they were, as always in India, very many) of Ambálá in the Panjáb, where he then lived, and among the most prominent of these was a version of the Headless Horseman. On the fact of the investigation becoming known, the story of the Headless Horseman of Ambálá was corroborated by a superior European official as an "eyewitness" (*Calcutta Review*, vol. LXXVII, 1883, pp. 182f.). This survival of Animism amongst modern European Christians is as persistent as among any other people or faith that may be mentioned, and in Burma we have the usual proofs of it, the poetic author of the *Soul of a People* supplying them. Thus he writes:—"Some of the Nats live in the trees, especially in the huge fig-tree that shades half an acre without the village, or among the fern-like fronds of the tamarind; and you will often see beneath such a tree, raised upon poles or nestled in the branches, a little house built of bamboo and thatch, perhaps two feet square. You will be told when you ask that this is the house of the Tree-Nat. Flowers will be offered sometimes, and a little water or rice maybe, to the Nat, never supposing that he is in need of such things, but as a courteous and graceful thing to do; for it is not safe to offend these Nats, and many of them are very powerful. There is a Nat of whom I know, whose home is in a great tree at the crossing of two roads, and he has a house there built for him, and he is much feared. He is such a great Nat that it is necessary when you pass his house to dismount from your pony and walk to a respectful distance. If you haughtily ride past, trouble will befall you. A friend of mine riding there one day rejected all the advice of his Burmese companions and did not dismount, and a few days later he was taken deadly sick of fever. He very nearly died, and had to go away to the Straits for a sea-trip to take the fever out of his veins. It was a very near thing for him. That was in the Burmese times, of course. After that he always dismounted. But all Nats are not so proud nor so much to be feared as this one, and it is usually safe to ride past.

"Sometimes these Tree-Nats are given to throwing stones at houses near them, because they have taken a dislike to, or been insulted by, some dweller in the house. There is a lady I know who had a house in Maulmain, in the compound of which grew several magnificent trees, and Nats lived in them. For some reason or other, these Nats took an enmity to the Burmese servant, and threw stones on the house, so that the lady and her husband could not sleep. For a time they could not discover the reason of this stone-throwing; but when the servant went away for a few days and the stoning stopped, it became apparent what the cause was. Directly he returned the stone-throwing became worse than ever, and as no means, though many were tried, were effectual in stopping it, it was necessary at last to dismiss the lad."

And again, "A friend of mine, a police officer who was engaged in trying to catch the last of the robber chiefs who hid near Pópá, told me that when he went up the mountain shooting he, too, had to make offerings. Some way up there is a little valley dark with overhanging trees, and a stream flows slowly along it. It is an enchanted valley, and if you look closely you will see that the stream is not as other streams, for it flows uphill. It comes rushing into the valley with a great display of foam and froth, and it leaves in a similar way, tearing down the rocks, and behaving like any other boisterous hill rivulet; but in the valley itself it lies under a spell. It is slow and dark, and has a surface like a mirror, and it flows uphill. There is no doubt about it; anyone can see it. When they came here, they made a halt, and the Burmese hunters with him unpacked his breakfast. He did not want to eat then, he said, but they explained that it was not for him, but for the Nats. All his food was unpacked, cold chicken and tinned meats, and jam and eggs and bread, and it was spread neatly on a cloth under a tree. Then the hunters called upon the Nats to come and take anything they desired, while my friend wondered what he should do if the Nats took all his food and left him with nothing. But no Nats came, although the Burmans called again and again. So they packed up the food, saying that now the Nats would be pleased at

the courtesy shown to them, and that my friend would have good sport. Presently they went on, leaving, however, an egg or two and a little salt, in case the Nats might be hungry later, and true enough it was that they did have good luck. At other times, my friend says, when he did not observe this ceremony, he saw nothing to shoot at all, but on this day he did well."

The childishness of the beliefs in relation to the Nats is evidence of their genuine Animistic and primitive nature. In the romantic *Soul of a People* just quoted (291ff.), a story is told of a Nat who lived in a great *nyaungbin* or sacred fig (Bódhi or Bó) tree and performed the usual miracles on those who offended him. He was the pride of the village, whose inhabitants regularly propitiated him, but he left because an English rest house had been built near. "You see the English government officials came and camped here, and didn't fear the Nat. They had fowls killed here for their dinner, and they sang and shouted: and they shot the green pigeons who ate his figs, and the little doves that nested in his branches." All which things were an abomination to the Nat, whom no sacrifices or propitiation would call back, to the sorrow of the villagers.

Supernatural Beings.

1. Gandabbá Nat Min (Gandharva), a celestial musician inhabiting the Zatumahárít Heaven. 2. Yókkasó, the Tree-spirit, living in the trunks of trees. 3. Búmasó, the Earth-spirit, guardian of the fields, living in the roots of trees. 4. Ákáthasó, the Sky-spirit, living in the tops of trees.





Haunting-Ghosts (Spirits in torment).
Pyétta Athúyaké (Préta Asurakáya).

CHAPTER IV.

ANIMISM AMONG THE WILD TRIBES.



IN order to obtain a grasp of the religious feeling prevalent among the Burmese themselves and to uncover the foundations on which the Buddhism of the country rests, it is necessary to dive into the ideas on religious subjects found to be present still among the many Wild Tribes, as explanatory of the genius of the population in religious matters. Excepting among the Karens, some of whom have a distinct Supreme God, the religion of the Wild Tribes is pure Animism and they have no idea of a Supreme Deity. "It is not merely that they have no name for such a being, but that they appear to have formed no conception of such an existence," or at best only an extremely vague one. On top of this Animism, which is nevertheless fully retained by the people, Buddhism is being superimposed gradually, even among such savage folk as the Wild Wás.

There is among the untutored tribes no worshipping of idols, no fetishism proper, no bowing to stocks and stones, and, excepting the Burmese and Shan monks, there are no ministers of religion, no professional priests, no regular clerical classes. "The *tumsas* and *mitwes* and *natsaws* and diviners generally do not devote themselves entirely to spiritual duties. When they are not professionally engaged they follow the same occupation as the rest of the villagers and, as often as not, are rather looked down upon than respected." Animism is indeed the soul of all aboriginal religion in Burma, and Fetishism, being contrary to the genius of the whole population, is only present in such attenuated forms as among Christians and others who believe in an impersonal God. There are holy and wishing stones and so on in Burma, as in Christian Europe, but that is all. A well-known example exists on the platform of the Shwé Dagón Pagoda at Rangoon and another "in a Nat's house at Nyaungú, before the figure of a spirit called Apé Shwé Myósin. It is a twisted curious-shaped stone which has magical powers ascribed to it. The sick come and try to lift it up. If they are successful they will soon recover health; if, on the other hand, its weight is too much for them, the inquirers will die. Similarly, on the ascent to Mandalay Hill, there is a little chapel in which, besides three figures of the *hénthá*, the Brahminy goose, each said to contain a sacred tooth brought from Ceylon, there is a flat, oval stone, with mystic characters inscribed on it. Many resort there to ascertain the probable issue of an intended journey or enterprise. If the stone proves heavy, the sign is bad."

Taw Sein Ko has remarked on the religious idea common to the Chins, Karens, Kachins and other wild tribes in the Burmese Territory that "their adoration and worship are given to spirits, who are believed to exercise interference in human affairs. These spirits may be broadly divided into five classes:—(1) personal spirits, who watch over the interests of individual persons; (2) family or house spirits, who preside over the destinies of families; (3) communal spirits, who are the tutelary gods of clans or tribes, and the extent of whose territorial jurisdiction is clearly defined; (4) the genii or dryads, who inhabit trees and rocks, hills and mountains, rivers and streams, lakes and seas; and (5) spirits who are doomed to continue their existence in a disembodied state. The personal spirits are evidently the souls which animate human beings, and which are supposed to haunt their abode when in the flesh for seven days and nights; the family spirits are the *manes* of ancestors, whose worship is common to the Mongols, Chinese, Hindus, and the ancient Romans; the communal spirits are the souls of departed heroes, the worship of whom forms the basis of Shamanism; the genii are spirits who haunt objects of nature, and especially those with which are associated ideas of sublimity and power; and the fifth and last class of spirits are those whose malignant influence has to be mitigated by propitiatory sacrifice, and who have been termed 'disease spirits.' Of these five classes of spirits, the second, third, and the fifth are the most feared, venerated, and worshipped." Traces of all this are everywhere visible in the family, village and festival customs of the Burmese themselves."

Similarly the *Census Report* for 1901, in a summary of the worship of the Wild Tribes, shows that their Animism is much like that found among the Burmese, and does not differ from that prevalent in any other part of the world in any essential. "All the professedly animistic races have Nats of their own. Their name, like that of the devils of old, is legion. The Kachins look upon one Chinun Wé Shun as the primordial creator of the denizens of the spirit world, who, with the assistance of the subordinate Nats whom he had called into existence, created out of a pumpkin a man-like thing, from whom the Kachin race is descended. Canonization is attended by no particular difficulties in the Kachin religion, for apparently it is possible for any one after death to be received into the exalted company of Nats. The Sawntung Karens have the monopoly of a national spirit, who is known as Lé and resides on Loi Maw Hill in the Shan States. A hill (that of Byingyí) is similarly the abode of the arch-Nat of the Banyang tribe of Karens. The Taungthú have both village and house Nats, who have to be constantly propitiated, and there can be apparently no question that the house Nats are the shades of early ancestors. The same is the case with the Taungyó. The spirit who presides over their harvesting is known as the Sabá Léppyá [butterfly soul] and receives suitable offerings at the time of the crop-threshing. Among the Karens of Lower Burma, the Ceres of the *taungyá* [jungle cultivation] is known as Píbíyaw. There she is not a *léppyá*, or butterfly, but assumes the more sombre guise of a cricket. Kózin is the spirit to whom the Hákas and some of the Southern Chins do reverence, with a view solely to averting evil. The Siyin Chins have no such Supreme Being. For them there is no world but this, and this world is at best the haunt of numberless evil spirits, who must at all costs be propitiated. Dwópí, In Mai, Nókpí and Nalwun are the names of some of these magnificent beings. Each has a particular scourge that he is able to inflict. One is the demon of madness, a second controls fever and ague, some can command a drought at will or sweep away the crops of a season in a storm of rain. Among the Chins of Lower Burma are found traces of ancestor worship mixed with the ordinary spirit cult. Offerings are made by the Southern Chins to the *khun*, or founders of the various clans, who are supposed to have an eye to the welfare of their descendants. These Chins, like the Burmans, have a Styx, which after death they cross, though by a thread and not in a ferry-boat. A being named Nga Thén appears to combine for them the offices of Charon and Rhadamanthus, and a cauldron of boiling water is one of the principal features of their infernal regions. The Chins' hell has certain points in common with that of the Szí, but it is thought probable that the Szí's Inferno has been largely borrowed from their Burmese neighbours. The Nats of the Palaungs are male and female, and all of them have their names. The most powerful of these beings goes by the name of Tá Kalú. Like the Karen Nats, he favours one particular eminence."

It has been already remarked that the imported Brahmanic Nats of the Burmese have now the attributes that distinguish the Spirits worshipped by the Wild Tribes, and that irresistible power, only to be met by propitiation, was the root idea leading to the phenomena both of the legends and the practices. Of the spirits of the Wild Tribes, it has been noted that none are beneficent. "There are no fairies; no good people; there is no Titania, no Queen Mab crowned with cowslips, no Oberon with a diadem of moon-beams, no Ariel, no Robin Goodfellow; nothing like Mustard Seed, Cobweb, or Pease-Blossom. The fairy tales are all grim; the goblins are none of them good-natured. There are no Prince Charmings and no Sleeping Beauties. Signs of totemism are frequent in the shape of amours in animal form and there are abundant hints of cannibalism in the remote past, but the chief characteristic is the recognition of remorseless power and the total ignoring of a happy ending for any but one of royal blood."

So again Sir George Scott has remarked that the Karens of Upper Burma and the Kachins, who have no other form of indigenous belief than Nat worship, do not regard the Nats "otherwise than as malevolent beings who must be looked up to with fear, and propitiated by regular offerings. They do not want to have anything to do with the Nats; all they seek is to be let alone. The bamboo pipes of spirit, the bones of sacrificial animals, the hatchets, swords, spears, bows and arrows that line the way to a Kachin village, are placed there, not with the idea of attracting the spirits, but of preventing them from coming right among the houses in search of their requirements. If they want to drink, the rice spirit has been poured out, and the bamboo stoup is there in evidence of the libation; the blood-stained skulls of oxen, pigs, and the feathers of fowls show that there has been no stint of meat offerings; should the Nats wax quarrelsome, and wish to fight, there are the axes and *dahs* [knives] with which to commence the fray. Only let them be grateful, and leave their trembling worshippers in peace and quietness. For the Karen all nature is filled with Nats, every tree and stone and pool and breath of air has its spirit. The dead are only separated from the living by a thin white veil, through which, however, none but the gifted can see and venture to speak to them in words." The attribution of remorseless power to an unseen being is but the savage's recognition of the Laws of Nature, and blind propitiation is but the natural argument for counteracting those that appear to be inimical to national or individual welfare. It is all Animism pure and simple.

Among the wild Burmese tribes the overwhelming necessity of providing means of protection against the spirits they so much dread has, as elsewhere in very many parts of the world, led to practical cruelty and loss of human life. Among the Wild Wás it has led to head hunting. "In the opinion of a Wá, the ghost of a dead man goes with his skull and hangs about its neighbourhood, and so many skulls posted up outside his village gate mean so many watch-dog *umbrae* attached to the village, jealous of their own preserves and intolerant of interlopers from the invisible world. Thus every addition to the collection of skulls is an additional safe-guard against ill-affected demons, and a head-hunting expedition is undertaken not, as was once thought, from motives of cannibalism or revenge, but solely to secure the very latest thing in charms as a protection against the powers of darkness. It is interesting to note that the head-cutting season lasts through March and April, and that it is when the Wá hill fields are being got ready for planting that the roads in the vicinity become dangerous for the neighbouring Shans. In a word, the little that is known of the practice seems to hint at the fact that the victim selected was primarily a harvest victim."

Such is the practice among the wildest of the hill tribes, but the same feeling of the absolute necessity for propitiation prevailed, during native rule, among the most civilised and highest of the Burmans themselves, leading to human sacrifice even in the most modern times, when the occasion was sufficiently important. The mental process causing these human sacrifices was no advance on that causing the head-hunting of the Wás. In both cases the object was to set up a *natsin*, an invisible defender of the place against other spirits, a familiar Nat of the town or palace. When Alompra (Alaungp'ayá) founded Rangoon in 1755 A.D., he sacrificed a Món Prince, who, as the Súlé Natgyí, the Myósade of Rangoon, is still worshipped as the guardian of that great workaday Capital. "When Mandalay was founded in 1857, the late Mindón Min, who has generally been supposed to be remarkable for his orthodoxy in religion, as well as his comparative readiness to adapt himself to modern ideas, consulted, it is said, not the learned and pious amongst his Buddhist monks, but a famous fortune-teller, and in accordance with his advice a pregnant woman was slain at night in order that her spirit might become the guardian Nat of the city. It is true that the great influence that Buddhism has gained is admitted by the fact that the alleged human sacrifice is said to have been made at night. But whether this inhuman act was perpetrated or not, there is no doubt that offerings of fruit and food were openly made by the King in the palace to the spirit of the dead woman, which was supposed to have taken the shape of a snake."

In further evidence of the spread of the custom of human sacrifice it may be quoted that the frontier between Kengtung and Kenghung, now the boundary between British and Chinese territory, was fixed some hundreds of years ago at Keng Law by the burying of two men alive, one facing north, the other facing south. In later and more civilised times two images of Buddha were placed back to back to mark the same place and fact. This evidence enables us to trace the custom in the stone figures grasping clubs at the four corners of the city walls of Mandalay, and its survival in jars of various kinds of oil placed in vaults under the corners of the same walls, just as the burying of newspapers, coins and the like, under foundation stones, is a survival of human sacrifice in Europe. The theory on which the custom of human sacrifice is based is again clearly visible in the employment of Brahman astrologers by King Thibaw and his Queen Súp'ayalát in 1885, during the third and last Burmese War, to chant incantations "so as to establish a

cordon of spiritual guards round the palace stockade, who would protect the royal inmates and drive off the invincible British soldiery."

It will be thus seen that an atheistic Animism is the genius of all indigenous religion in Burma, common to both the wildest and most civilised people of the country.

Hell, Ngayé (Niraya).





HELL ACCORDING TO THE BURMESE.

HELL ACCORDING TO THE BURMESE.

In the centre are those who are undergoing various punishments. Below these is depicted an unfortunate about to enter and begging for mercy, and near him is to be seen another who is reluctant to go forward and is being dragged and goaded onward. At the bottom of the picture is Thagyá judging the deceased; behind him are the four executioners. At the four corners are the abodes of the four great executioners—Yamahlá, Yamadá, Yamaká and Yamamin, the abode of the last being represented as empty.



Indian Gods as Nats.
1. Thayéthadí Nat (Sarasvatí). 2. Sandí Nat (Chandí, Párvatí). 3. Paramízwá Nat (Paramésvara, Siva).
4. Maháwénné Nat (Ganésa). 5. Wíthanó Nat (Vishnu).

CHAPTER V.

RECIPROCITY OF INDIAN AND INDIGENOUS INFLUENCES.



ANDREW LANG in his *Custom and Myth* has correctly laid down as an axiom—"What the religious instinct has once grasped it does not as a rule abandon, but subordinates or disguises, when it reaches higher ideas." This accounts for the phenomenon in Burma, as must have been already frequently noticed in the preceding pages, both among the cultivated and the wild tribes in the present day, of an overlay of Buddhism on the indigenous Animism in so many of the practices and beliefs connected with Nat-worship. As Christianity in Europe and as Muhammadanism in Asia, so Buddhism in Burma has strongly tinged, but not destroyed, the older form of belief. A story told in Smeaton's *Loyal Karens of Burma* explains the whole situation, whether observed in Burma, India, or elsewhere. It relates how some children, left by their parents in a safe place out of the reach of beasts of prey, were, nevertheless, so frightened at the approach of a tiger that, to save themselves, they took some pigs that had been placed in the shelter with them and threw them down for the tiger to devour. "Their eyes, however [so the story runs], were fixed, not on the tiger, but on the path by which they expected to see their father come. Their hands fed the tiger from fear, but their ears were eagerly listening for the twang of their father's bow-string, which would send the arrow quivering into the tiger's heart. And so, say the Karens, although we have to make sacrifices to demons, our hearts are still true to God. We must throw sops to the foul demons who afflict us, but our hearts are ever looking for God." Such is the reasoning of the Karens, who have for some time past become largely Christian. It is good to stand well both with God and Mammon is the practical reasoning, too, of the masses all the world over. They are always eclectic, so far as their general ignorance permits.

This mixture of indigenous Animism and Indian Brahmanic ideas, or rather, perhaps, in the following case it is more accurate to say this overlay of Buddhistic legend, comes out pretty clearly in the *Kósaung*, or personal Nats, "a kind of confusion of ideas between the proper spirit and the butterfly spirit, and representing as it were the genius of each individual, a kind of materialised conscience. They are twelve in number, six good and six bad, six male and six female, and regulate the life and doings of their *protégé*, accordingly as the benevolent or the malevolent gain the upper hand."

In vol. I., p. 529ff., of the present writer's *Legends of the Panjab*, and elsewhere, he has given an account of the Sect of the Lálbégí Mehtars, which has arisen among the lowest of the population of the Panjab, the scavengers, and he has there shown that their faith was a mere hagiolatry, a worship of anything that these ignorant people had observed to be considered holy by those with whom they came in contact, and that it was within their limits as eclectic as possible. The *Census Report* of Burma, 1901, contains an instructive account of the Sect of Talákús, or Bápaws, arising among the Karens of Kawkarék, not far from Maulmain in Lower Burma, in whose ideas a distinct admixture of Animism, Buddhism and Christianity is clearly traceable.

"The following narrative relates to a religious sect called 'Talákús' or 'Bápaws,' which is not generally known. 'Talákú' means 'a hermit,' and Bápaw' 'a worshipper of flowers,' both of which terms convey the same meaning, as will be seen from the accounts given below. The history or legend of the origin of the sect runs thus:—About a century and a half ago, Bódawthagyá,[1] a celestial being, seeing from the upper regions that the Karens were without God and religion, sent his grandson, Saw Yor, who came down and lived with the Karens at Tawá, a place in Siam, known there as Pramklaung. Saw Yor, having forgotten his identity and mission, became as one of them, attending only to temporal requirements. When his grandsire saw this, he came down to the Earth and reminded him of his mission, which was to teach the people religion and bring them to God. The latter thereupon assembled the Karens in a hall and taught them religion. As they were as simple as the fowls of the air, not being able to worship elaborately or expensively as other races, they were enjoined to pray with leaves. On this coming to the ear of a Siamese official, that functionary paid him a visit and attempted to capture him, on the ground that he was planning a rebellion, when he declared his innocence, informing the official that what he was doing was merely to bring the Karens from ignorance to light and religion, with the result that the official was persuaded to return with a present of Rs. 50. Some years after, when he had converted many to his faith, another Siamese official came to him and, accusing him of trying to subvert the Government, attempted also to secure him. Saw Yor gave him the same account of what he was doing, induced him to return with a present of Rs. 100, and persuaded him not to take him away, as, if that was done, the Karens, whom he had taught, would sink again to their former condition. Later on, when his converts grew in number and strength, and he had arrived at a great age, Saw Yor was on the point of paying the debt of nature. He then called two disciples, a Sgaw-Karen lad and a Pwo-Karen lad, to his bedside and asked them to procure wood to make a fire, as he wanted to warm himself. They complied with his request. The Pwo-Karen lad, being the smaller and younger of the two, brought a smaller bundle than the Sgaw-Karen. When the bundles were set on fire, one after the other, that brought by the Sgaw-Karen lad, being bigger and producing the greater heat, was the more satisfactory to Saw Yor. He again requested them each to light a candle. When they were lit, the Sgaw lad's candle, being the bigger and the brighter, Saw Yor was pleased with it and, nominating him his successor, passed away. The Pwo lad was wroth at this and vowed that he would not enter the monastery occupied by the Sgaw, declaring that he was not his superior intellectually or in accomplishments. At this point the Sgaw-Talákús and Pwo-Talákús separated, the former adhering to the Sgaw lad, who was afterwards known as Púkyaik, which means 'grandfather god,' and the latter to the Pwo lad, who became their leader. On the death of Púkyaik, Thaukkyaik, also a Sgaw, succeeded him. On the latter's death Saw Pwo, another Sgaw, became a Talákú and stationed himself at Kyóndó in the Myápúdaing Circle. When he died, Púksó, who is also a Sgaw, succeeded him and was in 1901 at Kyóndó.

"According to the belief of the Talákús, parents may pray for their children. When this is done, the children are exempted from that religious duty. Before a Nat-worshipper is received into the sect, he has to bring some pebbles, one for himself, one for his wife, and one for each of his children, wash them ceremonially, place them at the foot of a tree set apart for the purpose, and pray. From that time he and his family are recognized as Talákús, or Bápaws, and Nat-worship, with all its sacrifices, has to be forsaken. In this they differ from the general body of the Karens, who, although professing Buddhism, are not prohibited from worshipping Nats. They are unlike the Nat-worshipping Karens in another respect also, among whom the breeding of fowls, ducks or pigs is prohibited, though they may eat them. There is no such prohibition among the Talákús, who may breed and eat them at pleasure.

"The greatest religious festival observed by the Talákús is known as the Feast of the Heap of Fire, which takes place yearly on the full moon of *Tabódwé* [February], when, after three days' worship, a heap of wood about 15 cubits high, brought in by those who attend the festival, is set on fire and reduced to ashes. This, it is said, has its origin in the warming of the first hermit, Saw Yor, by the fires lit by his two great disciples.

"Members of this sect were returned at the Census as Buddhists, because they profess Buddhism also; but they appear, nevertheless, to be a distinct sect, whose reliance is much more on Talákú, the founder, and his successors than on Buddha and his doctrines, The leaves used by them at worship are, it may be noted, *eugenia* (*thabyé*) leaves."

In the above account, we have, in all its crudeness, the eclecticism which brings about that mixture of Buddhism and Animism so typical of modern Burmese Nat-worship. A like admixture of Buddhism, Brahmanism and Animism in the highest social life of Upper Burma is noted by Taw Sein Ko:—"At the court of the kings of Burma no month passed by without its attendant festivals, court functions, and ceremonies. In these festivals three elements of belief are distinctly traceable, *viz.*, Buddhistic, Brahmanic, and indigenous. Those held in

[1] Bódawthagyá almost exactly translates "Archangel Michael," *thagyá* being an "archangel," and *bódaw*, "a royal military leader." This is noteworthy, owing to the prevalence of Christianity among the Karens.

June may be taken as an illustration. Examinations in Buddhistic literature were held under the supervision of the State, and the successful candidates were inducted into holy orders. This was followed by a ceremony which was common to ancient India and China. The king himself ploughed with a golden plough, to notify to the people that agriculture was a noble avocation, essential to the maintenance of the community. At this ceremony the Brahman astrologers attached to the Burmese Court invoked the blessings of the gods of the Hindu Pantheon, while the Burmese female mediums, or *natkadaws*, made propitiatory offerings to the Nats of the indigenous Pantheon, commonly known as the 'Thirty-Seven Rulers.'"

Indian Gods as Nats (Burmanized).

1. Thayéthadí Nat (Sarasvatí). 2. Sandí Nat (Chandí, Párvatí). 3. Thíridéví Nat-thamí (Lakshmí).







Treasure Guardians (Oktasaung), holding the head of Byammá Nat.
1. Tapawtá Nat-thamí. 2. Girimandá Nat-thamí. 3. Rattá Nat-thamí.

CHAPTER VI.

ANIMISM IN CEREMONIES.



PROPITIATION leads to ceremonies, and ceremonies to the employment of persons who profess to know them. In Burma, "Spirit mediums, people who are able to invoke and exorcise or placate the Nats are common everywhere. In Mandalay, there were regular *natsayás*, *natóks*, and *natsaws*, male and female, who officiated at the annual State spirit feasts and sung the proper chants and offered the proper prayers. In the country, such people (*natwuns*) are sent for in cases of sickness, where ordinary measures fail to restore health. These *natwuns* are, in the great majority of cases, women. They usually wrap a piece of red cloth round their heads and limit their operations to hysterical chanting and wild whirling dances, again suggesting Mr. Andrew Lang's theory of obsession as the foundation of religion. But occasionally they do more. In various parts of the Northern portion of Upper Burma, when such a *natsayá* is called in, a bamboo altar is constructed in the house and various offerings (boiled fowls, pork, plantains, cocoanuts, rice) are placed on it for the Nat. The *natsayá* then stands a bright copper or brass plate on end, near the altar, and begins to chant, at the same time watching for the shadow of the Nat on the polished copper. When this appears, the officiant begins to dance and gradually works herself into a state of ecstasy. The state of tension produced frequently causes the patient to do the same thing, with obvious results one way or the other, especially if, as not unseldom happens, this invocation of the possessing spirit is continued for two or three days. When children are ill, little altars are built, or, if the village is on the Irrawaddy, little boats are made. On these an egg, some of the child's hair, and some sweetmeats are placed and the whole is consigned to the river. This is called an offering to the Chaungzón Nat, the Spirit of the Meeting of the Waters."

There is nothing unusual in all this from the Animistic point of view. The customs and the ideas can be illustrated from almost any of the wilder peoples of the world. Even the village ceremonies take on Animistic forms, which are familiar to all students, as appears from the following account, by an eyewitness, of some ceremonies at Mingin, on the Chindwin, to propitiate a Nat supposed to have caused a deficiency in the rainfall. "The rites were performed in a stretch of thick jungle, about a quarter of a mile from the village. There were about twenty men and as many boys, but no women. Although women are most commonly the hierophants in the exorcism of Nats, they are never present at formal Nat feasts. The *natsin* was a small wooden house on piles at the foot of a fine *padauk* tree, which was connected with the back door of the shrine by a number of plies of white thread, called the Nat's Bridge. The spirit ordinarily lived in this tree and only came to the shrine to

secure the offerings. He was a jungle spirit, a hamadryad, but in the same grove lived the Myómá Nats, the guardians of Mingin, and to them also was erected an altar, a small platform of green bamboo about two feet by one. They were the more powerful as regards Mingin, but had no influence over the weather. Nevertheless, to prevent them from being jealous of offerings made to the woodland Nat, this special shrine was built. It also stood under a large tree. The officiating priest was an old Burman of no particular position in the village. He commenced proceedings by offering a tumbler of *kaungyé* (rice-liquor) to the Myómá Nats, and then presented a corked bottle full of the same to the *sekthá*[1] deity of the *padauk* tree. The offering of rice-spirit was followed by another of water in the same order and then little heaps of pickled tea, placed on large leaves, were deposited with the same genuflexions as are customary at the pagoda. This was done by the assembled villagers, and while it was going on, the *sayá* [ministrant] sprinkled water all round both shrines, and strewed rice in handfuls about them. This rice was furnished by each household in the village, and each had also supplied a fowl and an egg, which were brought to the grove. The officiating *sayá* then recited a long prayer, asking for rain from the north and from the south, for peace and deliverance and for immunity from evil generally. When this was over, the will of the Nats was sought for, the signs being furnished by the fowls and the eggs. The fowls were cut open from the tail with a *dah* [knife] and the entrails were extracted. These were examined one by one by the *sayá*. The chief signs are the length and thickness of the intestines and the size of the stomach; the greater the more promising the sign. The larger side of the bowels should be turned upwards. Next the eggs were examined. These had been boiled hard and their whiteness was the *primâ facie* test. Any discolouration was bad, and the greater this was the more unfavourable the omen. Further details there were, but they were only known to the *natsayá*. When this had been done, the fowls' entrails were tied to feathers and hung up round the tree and round the shrine. The service was then over. The congregation took the bodies of the fowls and the eggs and *kaungyé* [rice-spirit], went home in a body, cooked the fowls, ate them and the eggs, and drank the liquor."

Every village has its guardian or *yuásaung* Nat, whose cult is as Animistic as may be. In some ceremonies connected with this Nat, the power of the indigenous faith over the imported Buddhism comes out very strongly, for when in dire need, face to face with an epidemic, the villagers first resort to the guardian Nat and then to the local monastery and the "Buddhist Law," but always to both before deserting a pest-stricken place and after re-entering it.

"None of the lower class Talaings would ever think of eating a morsel without first holding up his platter in the air, and breathing a prayer to the village Nat. They are particularly fond of putting up shrines to the Nats under the *le'pán* tree, from the wood of which coffins are frequently made. A feast must be held every three or four years in honour of the village Nat, at which the *nat-kadaw*, a woman called the Nat's wife, dances. This is done in order that sickness may be kept away. Should an epidemic actually break out, a very elaborate ceremony is gone through. Probably, first of all, the figure of a spectre, or of a *balú* [ogre] is painted on an ordinary earthenware water-pot, and this is solemnly smashed to pieces about sundown with a heavy stick or a *dah*. As soon as it gets dark, the entire populace break out into yells, and make as much noise generally as they can compass, with the view of scaring away the evil spirit who has brought the disease. This is repeated on three several nights, and if it is not then effective the *yahán*s [monks from the monastery] are called in to give their assistance. The prior with his following repeat the Ten Precepts, chant the *Payétgyí*[2], and then one of the sermons of the Lord Buddha is declaimed, the same by the preaching of which he drove away the pestilence which was devastating the country of Wéthálí [Vésálí]. If this last ceremony is not effectual, the village is abandoned. The inhabitants leave the sick and the dying to their fate, and go off to the jungle, where each household camps out by itself for a time. Before they return again, the yellow-robed monks, in recognition of much alms, read the Law up and down the street between the houses. When they have gone back to the monastery, the Nat's shrine is repaired, and abundant offerings deposited. Having thus made their peace with the representatives of both religions, the people return to their houses, light fires, cook rice for new offerings, and then enter upon their ordinary pursuits, as if no interruption whatever had occurred.

"That is what would take place in any ordinary Burman village. But among the Talaings, and in the more retired places in the jungle, occupied by ignorant uncultivated Burmans, the function called *yuá-khyá-thí* would be carried out, which is much more purely geniolatric in its character. This is sometimes done when a prominent man in the hamlet is sick, more often when there is danger of a contagious disease. A great feast of cooked rice and meat, roasted fowls and ducks forming a prominent part of it, is heaped up on a platform specially erected for the purpose some distance outside the village. Everybody in the village is required to have some part in the

[1] *Sek, chakra*, is a supernatural weapon, from the miraculous quoit of the old Brahmanic gods.

[2] The Great *Payét*, Hymn of Protection, *Parittam*. Though universal in Buddhism, the Paritta Hymns are unorthodox and are not part of the *Tipitaka* or Scripture.

ceremony. A few are sent out beforehand, who dress themselves up in a fantastic way, and pretend to be *balús*, evil Nats, and witches. With them are others who feign to be dogs, and rush about on all fours, barking and howling; others represent pigs, and grunt and nuzzle about with their noses in the ground. After this performance has been carried on for a certain time, the remainder of the villagers come out in a band, and, through one or more spokesmen, demand of the possessed whether those lying sick at home will recover and whether the bad spirits are satisfied with the offerings. It is specially ordained at these exhibitions that no one shall be called by his real name; such mention, if made inadvertently, would expose the person addressed to considerable danger, even if he should make no sign of betraying himself, for he certainly would not answer. The quasi-*tasé* [ghosts, spirits] always reply that the sick will recover and the plague leave the locality. Thereupon the villagers rush off like madmen into the surrounding forest, and run about hither and thither in a reckless way with an open cloth, or the end of their waistcloth [*pasó*] in their hands. Some of them suddenly make a plunge with their cloth over a bush or tussock of grass, and then closing it up carefully, hurry breathless back to the village. The *léppyá* or butterfly souls of the sick man are supposed to have been captured. The *pasó*, or cloth, is carefully opened and shaken over the patient's head, and the *léppyás* are supposed to return to their proper habitation. This operation is repeated several times, in case a wrong butterfly might have been captured, or lest the actual one should have escaped on the way. Then everybody returns. The function is not without its danger, for it has happened that the temporary mimes have become permanently possessed of evil spirits, and as witches and wizards have proved as great curses to the neighbourhood as any pestilence could have been. Which things are an allegory. The whole ceremony is beginning to get into very bad odour, and respectable people avoid having anything to do with it, while those who have taken a part are ashamed to own it."

Animistic as all this ceremonial is, some of the ceremonies of Burma have so European a ring about them that they make one hesitate to place the natives of the country lower than the European peasant in point of superstition. "The Talaings, and many of the Burmans in the Irrawaddy delta, have a regular Nat-feast just before harvesting begins. The figure of a woman is fashioned out of straw, and a *tamén*, kerchief, and other portions of female dress placed along with it in a bullock cart. Great quantities of *kauk-hnyin*, 'sticky rice,' are heaped up, and the whole driven in procession round the ripe paddy fields. The figure is then set up in the place where the paddy is to be stored, and the offerings are usually swept away by the boys of the place, whose appetites overcome their fear of the Nats, Búmadé, the Guardian of the Earth, and Nágyí, the Guardian of the Grain, to propitiate whom the feast is held."

The orthodox Buddhist monk never attends a social ceremony. He has no concern with births, deaths and marriages, but so strong is the Animistic tendency of the people that monks are nevertheless found by death beds, but with the idea of keeping away *balús*, *tasés* and demons. "There is no thought of the monk administering spiritual consolation to the dying man. The good influence of his pious presence keeps away evil spirits, and nothing more. No exhortations of the *yahán* can alter the balance of merit and demerit which is already cast up for the dying." As to marriages, the present writer has been present at an upper-class wedding ceremony in Mandalay, which was hardly, in many respects, to be distinguished from one performed among Hindus in India. The craving for a show on so important an occasion and the desire to prognosticate a happy life for their offspring were apparently too great for the Buddhist piety of the wealthy family concerned, and the services of a *pónná*, or Manipúrí Brahman priest, were called in. A Hindu marriage ceremony, be it remembered, is one prolonged invocation of good luck, highly Animistic in character.

It is incumbent on royal personages, all over the world, to be leaders of the national religion, and to be imbued with the religious beliefs of the people they rule over. The Kings of Burma were no exception to the rule, and accordingly we find that their public and formal life was filled with popular ceremonies, Animistic in nature, but strongly tinged, of course, with Buddhistic and even, through the *pónnás* or astrologers, with Brahmanic ideas. At his coronation the King was anointed with water, blessed by eight *pónnás*, and presented with the *payékpán* or holy flower with supernatural powers, and the *pónnás* settled on the auspicious day for ascending the throne.

Then, again, the monthly festivals, which formed so prominent a feature in the life of the Court and Capital, were replete with Buddho-Brahmanic Nat-worship. At the first festival in April, the Thingyán, which is, by the way, common to all Burma, holy water from the Irrawaddy, as the Ganges of the Burmese, was brought to the King and distributed by him as doubly sacred,—having passed first through the hands of *pónnás* and then through his own. The water was to be used for washing sacred images, which is very Brahmanic in tone. And during this Thingyándaw Feast *pónnás* invoked the Nats of *hón* or fire and *gyó* (*graha*) or the planets to bless the royal heads.

At the third festival in June, at the Mó-nat-púzaw-pwé, Feast of the Worship of the Lord of the Rain (*Mógha-nátha-púja*), the *sayádaws*, or orthodox Buddhist abbots, prayed the "Ngayán Min's Prayer" for kindly

rain publicly at the Palace; for by legend Ngayán Min was a Bódhisattva [coming Buddha] in the form of the King of the Murrel-fish (Snake-head). And the *pónnás*, or Hindu astrologers, built two temporary *tazaungs* (seven-storied buildings), in which were placed figures of the Nat of the Rain in human form, and of the Nat of the Water in that of a frog, alligator or fish. After the prayers, these were thrown into the Irrawaddy, acting as the Ganges. This was too Indian for the Kings and they did not take part in it: only tolerated it.

At the twelfth festival in February was the worship of Nats proper and of the Thirty-seven Nats especially, but most especially of Mahágíri, Aungzwá-magyí and Ngázíshin, of whom more anon. The King also sent offerings to the Nats or *nat-balús* (ogres) who guarded the four gates of the city.

The following account reveals one of the prettiest developments of ancient Indian Animistic practices to be found all over Burma, and India too for that matter, at the present day. "At the same season [end of the Wá or 'Lent' in October] there is an illumination on the river. As soon as it is dark, the villagers row out into the middle of the stream and set adrift a multitude of little oil lamps, each fastened to a little float of bamboo or plantain stems. The lamps are simply little earthenware cups filled with oil, and each supplied with a small piece of cotton for a wick. Thousands of them are sent out by a single village, and the sight from a steamer suddenly rounding a bend and coming upon a bank of these little stars of light afloat on the river is very singular. In the distance it looks like a regular sea of flame, and as there is plenty of oil, on the night of the full moon there is a constant succession of these shoals of twinkling lights floating down the whole length of the Irrawaddy from above Bhamo to China Buckeer [top to bottom of the Irrawaddy in Burma], every village sending its contingent.

"This ceremony, called *yébaunghmyawthí*, or *míbaunghmyawthí*, launching water or fire rafts, is in remembrance of a universally honoured *phayá-ngé*, a lesser divinity called Shin Upagó, who lives down at the bottom of the river in a *kyí-pyáthat*, or brazen spire, where he zealously keeps the sacred days [*wá*]. In a former existence he carried off the clothes of a bather, and for this mischievous pleasantry is condemned to remain in his present quarters till Arímadéya [Ariya-Méttéya, usually merely Méttéya], the next Buddha, shall come. Then he will be set free, and entering the *thénga* [*sangha*, church] will become a *yahándá* [*arahanta*, saint], and attain Nébbán [Nirvána]. He is a favourite subject for pictures, which represent him sitting under his brazen roof, or on the stump of a tree, eating out of an alms-bowl, which he carries in his arms. Sometimes he is depicted gazing sideways up to the skies, where he seeks a place that is not polluted by corpses. Such a spot is not to be found on earth, where every stock and stone is but the receptacle of a departed spirit."

The Golden Heads.
Mahágíri Nat (No. 2) and his sister Hnamádawgyí Nat (No. 3), as seen at Pagán about 1826.



THE SENTIENT BEINGS ACCORDING TO THE BURMESE.

Buddhist Cosmogony.

The Sentient Beings according to the Burmese.

Buddhist Cosmogony.

The Burmese ideas of Sentient Beings, borrowed from India, represent a philosophy dealing with the evolution of the soul. First, in the Nether Worlds we have the evil soul, then in the present world we have the normal soul of man, rising to the higher soul of the angel in the nearer heavens. Next we have the soul getting the better of the body in the Rúpá world of the higher angels, and lastly, the soul dissociated from the body in the Arúpá, or immaterial, worlds, waiting for Nirvána or dissolution.

In the Burmese Buddhist Cosmogony, all living beings are divided into three classes:—Kamá, generating; Rúpá, corporeal ungenerated; Arúpá, incorporeal. These three classes are divided into thirty-one species, each with its *bón* (*bhúmi*, place, state, stage, region) or seat.

There are eleven divisions of the Kamá, seven happy and four unhappy. The four unhappy divisions are, lowest upward:—Ngayé (Niraya), Hell (1);[1] Pyéttá (Préta), Ghosts (2); Athúyakhé (Asurakaya), Fallen Angels (3); Tayéssán (Tiracchána), Animals (4). The seven happy divisions are, lowest upward:—Manókthá (Manussa), Man (5); and then the Abodes of the Nats proper or the Material Heavens, *viz.*, Zatumahárít (Chatummahárájika), the Land of the Four Great Kings (6); Táwadénthá (Távatimsá), the Land of the Thirty-three Rulers (7); Yámá (8); Túthitá (Tusitá) (9); Némmánaratí, the Land of Mára or Mán Nat (10); Wutháwadí (Vasavattí) (11).

There are sixteen divisions of the Rúpa or Byammá (Brahmá) Nats, beings that are corporeal but ungenerated. The ideas as to these are shadowy, but their names are as follow:—Byammápayéthitsá (Brahmapárisajjá) (12); Byammápayawhitá (Brahmapuróhitá) (13); Mahábyammá (Mahábrahmá) (14); Payéttábá (Parittábhá) (15); Appamánábá (Appamánábhá) (16); Abáthéya (Abhassará) (17); Payéttathúbá (Parittasubhá) (18); Appamánathúbá (Appamánasubhá) (19); Thubakénna (Subhakhinna) (20); Wéhappó (Véhapphalá) (21); Athinyathat (Asaññasatta) (22); Awíhá (Avihá) (23); Atáppá (Atappá) (24); Thudáthá (Sudassá) (25); Thudáthí (Sudassí) (26); Akánéttá (Akanittha) (27).

There are four divisions of the Arúpá Nats, formless incorporeal beings, imagined as immaterial suns, waiting in absolute peace for Nébbán (Nirvána):—Akáthán (Akásána) (28); Wínyán (Viññana) (29); Akinzin (Akiñcañña) (30); Wathinyán (Vasaññána) (31).

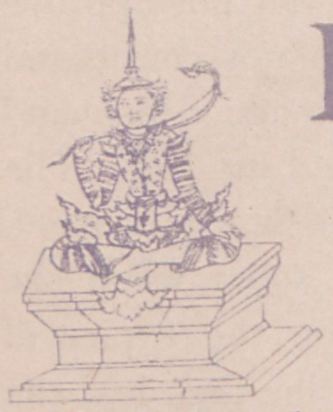
[1] The numbers after these names refer to the numbers in the Plate.



Treasure Guardians (Oktasaung), holding the head of Byammá Nat.
1. Minthígá Nat-thamí. 2. Mahawragá Nat-thamí. 3. Mandágí Nat-thamí. 4. Kénnayá Nat-thamí.

CHAPTER VII.

SUBSIDIARY BELIEFS.



IT is a phenomenon of human nature that every religion should have its main and subsidiary beliefs and practices, and it is usual to distinguish these two forms of belief by the terms "religion" and "superstition." But when one is dealing with Animism and the Brahmanic parts of Buddhism, it is difficult to maintain the division in this way. It exists, however, and both Animism and Brahmanic Buddhism have their subsidiary beliefs in the forms of divination, astrology, necromancy, magic and charms. It will be seen that the inhabitants of Burma, in following the practices consequent on the ideas involved in the above terms, conformed to the conditions that have made their main faith Animism, overlaid by a form of Buddhism imbued with Brahmanic notions.

The Shans of the British Territory took their Buddhism from the Burmese, so that with them the Buddhist faith is removed a point further from the Indian form than is that of the Burmans, and is therefore a point nearer to that of the indigenous Animism. The Burmese astrology is purely Indian in origin, as its very name *bédin* (*védánta*) shows, and all the Court astrologers were by way of being "Brahmans" (Pónnás, Sanskrit Puṇya), *i.e.*, descendants of Indian captives from Manipur, Assam and Arakan, and of foreign residents from the time of the Pagán dynasty (11th century, A.D.). The Shan astrology is, however, not only itself clearly Taoist in origin, but it is dependent on the *Phéwan*, or Sixty Year Cycle procured from the Chinese. It has overlaid that procured from Burma, even in Burma itself, and is day by day increasing in power, even amongst the most pious Buddhists, including the very wardens of the pagodas. Divination, calculation of lucky and unlucky days, horoscope casting, *et hoc genus omne*, are a living force in governing the lives and actions of the whole population of Burma, and this being so, the influence of Shan astrology cannot but become an overwhelming power in maintaining the Animism which dominates the religious ideas of the country.

The strong Animistic nature of the Shan influence comes out forcibly in the following popular belief. Every day has its presiding Nat, who requires a particular diet. It is well to know this, so as to know what to offer to

the Nat, or what to guard from him. The diet is not complicated in reality, though made to appear so by the astrologers for their own purposes. It may be stated thus. The Nat of the day eats according to the following table :—

	Waxing Moon.		Waning Moon.	
Nats	on the 1st,	11th	on the	6th,
men	on the 2nd,	12th	on the	7th,
fowls	on the 3rd,	13th	on the	8th,
ducks	on the 4th,	14th	on the	9th,
dogs	on the 5th,	15th	on the	10th,
pigs	on the 6th,		on the 1st,	11th,
bulls	on the 7th,		on the 2nd,	12th,
buffaloes	on the 8th,		on the 3rd,	13th,
ponies	on the 9th,		on the 4th,	14th,
elephants	on the 10th,		on the 5th,	15th.

This means that you can offer fowls, ducks, dogs and pigs on three days each of the month and must guard your Nats, men, bulls, buffaloes, ponies and elephants most carefully, each on three other days. All this is Animism pure and simple.

From astrology to necromancy is a short step, and witchcraft was recognised by the native Burmese law. The ordinary Animistic nature of this belief comes out in Taw Sein Ko's description of the remedy for witchcraft. Writing in 1901, he says :—"Bewitched persons are restored to health by *hmaw-sayás*. These doctors attain their qualifications by drinking water, in which ashes of scrolls containing cabalistic squares and mystic figures have been mixed, by taking special internal medicine, or by having their bodies tattooed with figures of Nats, magic squares, or incantations. The afflicted person is brought before a *hmaw-sayá* and he commands the offending Nat, witch, or spirit to enter and reveal its wishes through the medium of its victim. Sometimes a mere threat is sufficient to scare away the Nat, witch, or spirit, but generally drastic measures have to be resorted to in order to exorcise it, and pungent substances are rubbed into the eyes of the patient, who is also beaten severely! Occasionally, *hmaw-sayás* are not well qualified and they are worsted, and some of them even get killed. The ill-treatment meted out to the sick person is borne by the spirit, and the former, when cured, does not feel any after-effects of the rough usage.

"At Prome, a few years ago, U Mingyaw Nat[1] became enamoured of a respectable Burmese young lady. His spirit possessed her person and he declared his erotic intentions. The guardian of the girl did not approve of the proposed union, for the status or profession of a *nat-kadaw* (a Nat's Wife, or medium) is not considered respectable, and he married her to a young Burman. The Nat became enraged and the newly-married husband sickened and died, and the guardian was obliged to celebrate the marriage between the widow and the Nat. The lady thus became a *nat-kadaw* and her oracular utterances were highly esteemed. Whenever she was possessed, she would drain off jars of toddy and four or five bottles of gin or brandy, and would be quite sober when she regained consciousness. She would even smoke *ganja* [a hemp intoxicant] in her cigars. After the expiry of about six months the Nat apparently got tired of his lady-love and left her for 'pastures new.' She then lost the power of seeing into the past and future and, to hide her shame, she betook herself to Maúbin, where she died of cholera, perhaps with the approval or connivance of her celestial husband."

Unlike Burmese astrology, Burmese magic seems not to have been greatly subjected to indigenous influences and to be still mainly Indian in origin, the Nats connected with it being chiefly Burmanised representatives of Indian Buddhist personages, *vide* Taw Sein Ko's description of Pónnaka Nat, invoked for the purpose of doing harm by invisible agency. "Pónnaka is the name of a Nat in the *Vidura Játaka*, who took the wise minister Vidura to the Queen of the Nagás [Serpents]. The Queen had heard of the wisdom and virtue of Vidura and was eager to hear him preach, and Pónnaka was commissioned by her daughter to fetch him. He did so most effectually by tying him to the tail of his horse. The Pónnaka Nat is capable of doing three things in an invisible manner :—throwing stones at a house, beating people with a stick, burning a house or village.

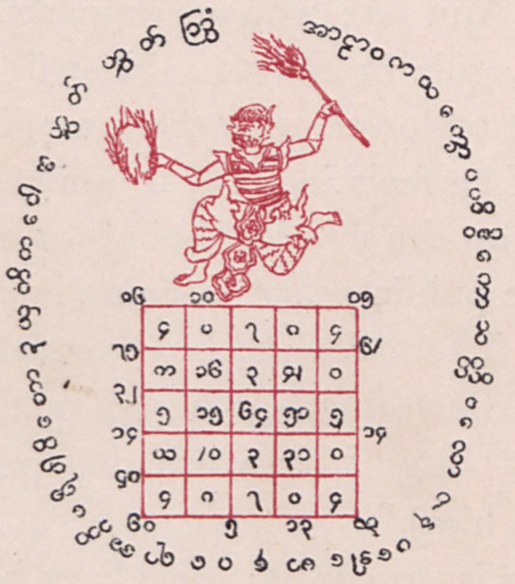
"It is necessary, of course, to invoke this Nat, and this is done in the following way :—Make a wax image of an ogre on horseback (see fig. 1). The saddle should be made of the *pasó* (loin-cloth) of a dead man, the bridle should be made of strings used in tying the thumbs and toes of a dead man, and the tail should be made of the hair of a person who has hanged himself. Take the image to a big tree noted for the powers of its presiding

[1] Minyé Aungdin Nat, one of the Thirty-Seven Nats, for whom see Chapter XII.

Nat and, after propitiating him with suitable offerings, offer up this prayer: 'O lord Nat! Vouchsafe to receive my Pónnaka, and let him do my bidding.' After this, bury the image under the tree. If a heap of stones is







piled up near the tree, and if Pónnaka is instructed to throw them at any house, a battery of stones will be directed against that house. If an image of Pónnaka be made of a special kind of wood (fig. 2), and if he is directed to assault any given person or persons, the required effect will be produced. The most disastrous consequences are reserved for the image of Pónnaka with the firebrand. This image and the legend round it (fig. 3) should be inscribed on a potsherd and, by intoning the legend, houses or villages can be burnt down by an invisible agency. The following is a translation of the incantation: 'O fierce, strong, and powerful Pónnaka Nat! I pray thee go quickly and burn down such and such a house, hamlet, village, or town.'"

All this is somewhat elaborate. The ordinary invocation of Pónnaka is performed by an enterprising *bédin-sayá*, or astrologer. "He carries off some cinders and bits of wood from the funeral pyres of people who have been burnt, and collecting a large assortment of such charred pieces of wood, puts them secretly in the house of the person whose feelings he wishes to work on. At night the spirits come and keep up a battery of stones on the unfortunate man's roof, all attempts to find out where the stones come from being quite unavailing."

The commonest use for Burmese magic is to procure invulnerability, and here again the origin is Indian, as the following account from Taw Sein Ko shows, and also the fact that the protective cabalistic squares contain usually incantations in Páli. "The great prototype of acquired invulnerability was an Indian King of mythic times, called Pórisada, or man-eater, now corrupted by the Burmese into Bawdíthádá. This king was extremely fond of beef, and one day, the supply running short, his cook served up human flesh instead. He found the taste so excellent, that he gave stringent orders that nothing but human flesh should be prepared for his table in future. The direct result of this command was that the country became perceptibly depopulated, and there was some popular effervescence.

"*Vox populi* was *vox dei* even in those days, and the king had to pronounce upon himself the sentence of banishment. He was now free from any restraint imposed by law or public opinion, and his consumption of human flesh was excessive. Eventually, while hiding in a pond filled with lotus plants, he was captured by a Bódhisattva, and, through him, was reconverted into a sociable being, in love and peace with his fellow-creatures.

"There are thus three representations of Bawdíthádá: leaving his capital with a two-edged sword on his shoulder and holding a human head (fig. 1); crowned with a lotus leaf while hiding himself in the pond (fig. 2); returning to the capital after his reconversion (fig. 3). All or any of these figures must be tattooed in red above







the waist. The vermilion dye must be mixed with human fat and with a potent mixture called *tháthána-ngádaung-se*, or the 'water of the five thousand years of the religion,' and it is absolutely imperative that the candidate shall hold a piece of human flesh between his teeth while he is being tattooed.

"Any one who is properly tattooed with the figures of Bawdíthádá is proof against wounds inflicted by sword, gun, or cudgel. He will beat the record in high and long jumps, and his courage will be undaunted. He will be endowed with these qualities, as soon as he has finished muttering the legends inscribed round the figures. But, if he feels inclined to jump and skip about without the help of these incantations, he has gone mad. The strain on the mind of being tattooed in the manner above mentioned is so great that most aspirants, fortunately for the public peace, become incurably mad.

"The following is a translation of the incantations muttered by a fully qualified Bawdíthádá. For figs. 1 and 3: 'I, Bawdíthádá, who am qualifying to be the great robber chief Angulimalla, am now going fast ahead.' For fig. 2: 'May I, Bawdíthádá, speedily succeed in capturing him' (the Bódhisattva, King Sutasóma, who reconverted him)."

It is, too, in its subsidiary beliefs, its superstitions, *aber-glaube* as it were, that one has corroborative evidence of the extent to which Animism pervades the Burmese mind. During the disturbances which followed the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886, the revolutionary bands were kept together by means of incantations, runes, cabala and amulets, based either on pure indigenous Animistic ideas, or on similar ideas imported from Brahmanic India. And this is the case wherever disturbances are created in any part of the country, even of the most settled districts. "It is a singular proof of the way in which Animistic worship overlies the Buddhism of Burma, that many of the most noted seers, necromancers and tattooers are *póngyís*. Many of the most stubborn dacoit leaders were monks, and those who were not, usually had warlock monks in their train."

Monkish influence in the rising in the Tavoy District, in favour of Myingun Prince in 1888, comes out in the cryptic sayings spread about to indicate the proper time to strike on each day, when the situation in other respects seemed to promise well for an attack. "On Sunday, when the sun casts a shadow ten feet long, the *nagá* [serpent] shall overcome the *galón* [*garuda*, griffin] bird. On Monday, when the sun casts a shadow five feet long, the deer shall overcome the tiger. On Tuesday, when the sun casts a shadow eight feet long, the elephant shall overcome the lion. On Wednesday, when the sun casts a shadow four feet long, the goat shall overcome the dog. On Thursday, when the sun casts a shadow three feet long, the mouse shall overcome the cat. On Friday, when the sun casts a shadow twelve feet long, Mahawthátá [Mahásatta = Bódhisattva] shall overcome King Sulani Brámadàt [Chóla-Brahmadatta]. On Saturday, when the sun casts a shadow nine feet long, the frog shall overcome the snake."

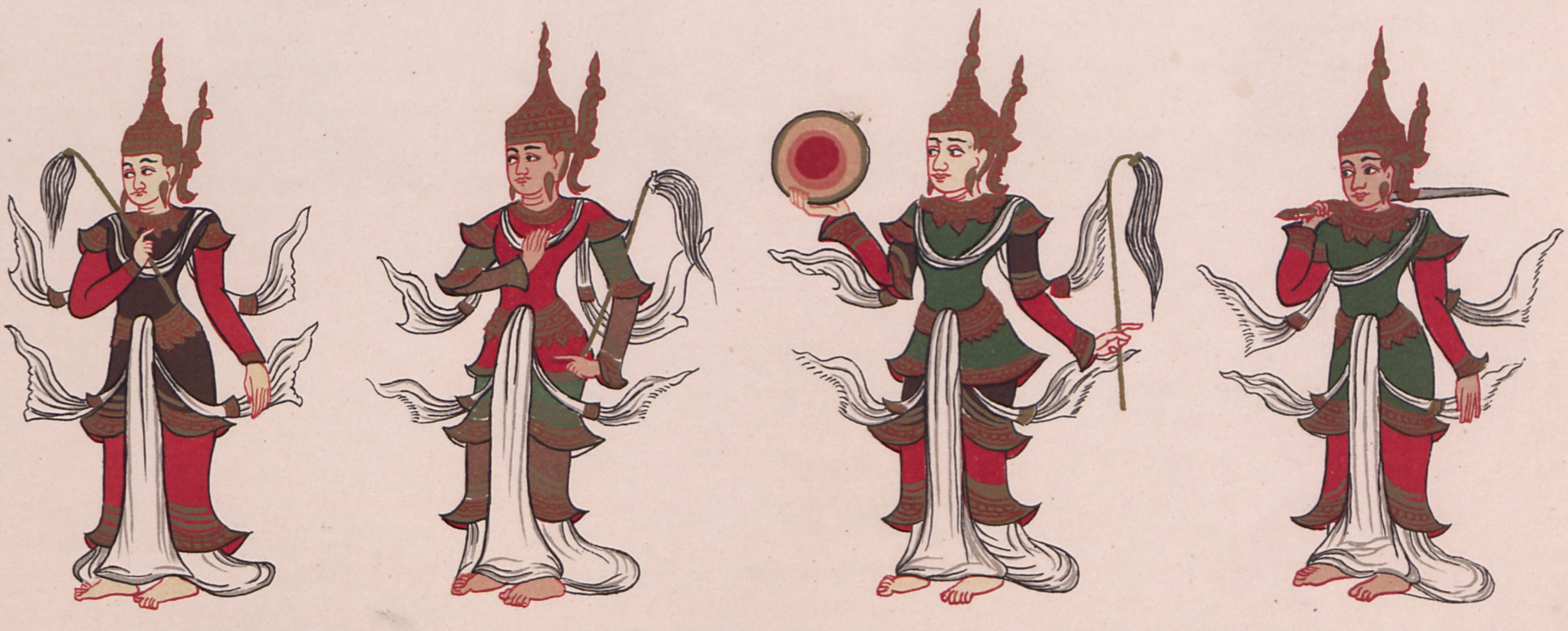
The above method of indicating the hour is Brahmanic, with a Buddhistic tinge, but unadulterated Neo-Brahmanism appears in the following interesting version from Sangermano (*Burmese Empire*, p. 119f.), of the familiar story of Ráma and Hanumán, out of the Indian *Rámáyana*, used for the purposes of magic. "One of the most potent charms is a handle of ivory or buffalo's horn, upon which are carved several representations of a certain monstrous ape. The history of this creature is as follows. A Nat of the name of Mán Nat [Mára], being dead, passed into the womb of a female ape, who shortly after brought forth this famous monster. Its name is Hanumán, the compound of the word Hanu, signifying an ape, and its former appellation.[1] The stature of this monster was enormous, being four leagues and a half; it was possessed of the greatest agility, for at one bound it could leap up to heaven, or pass a sea of the breadth of a hundred leagues; and it had besides the property of transforming itself into an ape of the ordinary size. Its strength was prodigious, as it could break any mountain in pieces, or transport it from one place to another; finally, it was gifted with immortality, so that none but the great king, Yáma Min [King Ráma], could destroy it. It could both understand and speak the language of men. One day, it mistook the sun for a fruit, and having a great desire to eat it, jumped up to it, and seized it with its hands to bring it down. But the Nat of the sun cursed it for its boldness, and as a punishment sentenced it to be reduced to an ape of the usual dimensions, to lose all its strength, agility, and immortality, and to remain in this condition till the great king, Yáma Min, should appear, who, by stroking its back three times, would restore to it, together with its size, all its other great qualities. And in fact, after this malediction, Hanumán became a common ape, as powerless and as weak as any other of its kind; and so it remained till King Yáma Min appeared. He, having been informed of the curse and the prediction, and being about to wage war with the king of the giants, sent for Hanumán, and having stroked its back three times, restored it to its former state, hoping now to derive great assistance from it in his enterprise. And, indeed, he afterwards employed it in the most arduous undertakings; and, through its means, obtained a complete victory over the giants, and recovered his wife from their hands. Wherefore the officials and all the people believe, that by carving the figure

[1] This is pure folk-etymology, seeking for a *Burmese* derivation of the *Sanskrit* proper name Hanumán, for the Monkey-God.

of this monster upon the ivory or bone handles of their daggers or swords, they communicate to them the virtue of cutting through every obstacle, and of warding off the blows of any hostile weapon." This shows that the modern Burmese have not, under the guidance of their Hindu astrologers, been content to go to the pre-Buddhistic Brahmanism of India for their magic, but have even used that form of Brahmanism, which is in India post-Buddhistic and is indeed modern Hinduism.

Guardian Spirits.

1. Búmasó, Myésaung, the Field-guardian (Khétthapála). 2. Yókkasó Nat Min, Thippinsaung, the Tree-guardian (Yakkha).
3. Athúyén Nat Min, King of the Titans (Asurinda). 4. Wéthawún Nat Min, the Treasure-guardian (Vessavana, Kuvéra).





The Four Kings of the Zatumahárít Heaven.

1. Daddáratá Nat Min (Dhatarattha), King of the East [North]. 2. Virúlaka Nat Min (Virúlhaka), King of the South.
3. Virúpekka Nat Min (Virupakkha), King of the West. 4. Kuvéra or Wéthawún Nat Min (Kuvéra or Vessavana), King of the North [East].

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THIRTY-SEVEN NATS.



WE are now in a position to examine the Thirty-Seven Nats themselves, and to grasp the ideas that have led to their existence in the imagination of the Burmese, and the forms they have taken on at the present day.

The Order of the Thirty-Seven Nats belongs to the category of ghosts or spirits of departed heroes, except in one instance, the chief of the Order, Thagyá Nat, who springs from ancient Indian Brahmanic ideas. Now, not only are all the Thirty-Seven Nats, excepting Thagyá Nat, ghosts of departed heroes, but they all, except one other, purport to be the spirits of persons either themselves royal, or directly or indirectly connected with royalty. The stories, as now commonly current, are also not necessarily fastened on to persons very long since dead. The majority of them were alive between the 13th and 17th centuries A.D., and some less than 200 years ago. One was well known to the early Portuguese settlers, and was often mentioned in their accounts. I need hardly point out that this is a strong indication of the stage of civilisation to which the modern Burman has reached. I may here say that each of these Nats has his or her own cult, *i.e.*, an appropriate ceremony or festival, and an appropriate place and time for performing it.

Though everybody knows about the Thirty-Seven Nats and everybody talks about them glibly enough, I found that the books passed them over, so far as details were concerned, and I had much difficulty in hunting up vernacular information on the subject, and in obtaining named pictures and images of them. In the end, I managed to procure some outline legends and a complete set of images carved by Burmans in teak-wood, which I believe is unique, unless a collection which I heard was to be sent to Copenhagen Museum in 1895 has been placed there. I propose to explain now a series of illustrations made from the images in my possession, with the aid of the information thus picked up at odd times from various Burmans and my subsequent researches. Quoting so trustworthy an authority as Taw Sein Ko, I would note that, "as a rule, images of Nats are uncouth objects, generally made of wood, with some sort of human countenance. Those of the 'Thirty-Seven Rulers' are being

carefully preserved within the precincts of the Shwézigón Pagoda at Pagán." My specimens are, however, I am glad to say, fine examples of indigenous art.

The following is a list of the vernacular information in my possession. Of books—(1) *Mahágítà Mêdanígyàn*; pp. 117-179: Disquisition on the Thirty-Seven Nats. List at p. 118. Woodcuts: on front cover, No. 10, Aungzwámagyí Nat; on p. 179, Thagyá Nat. Published at Rangoon, B.E. 1253 (1891). (2) Bound MS. in Burmese; "The Thirty-Seven Nats." Of MSS. unbound—(3) MS. A., a list with very brief notes. (4) MS. B., a list with more copious notes. (5) MS. C., a list with very brief notes. (6) MS. D., a list with notes on each. (7) MS. E., fragmentary notes on Nats Nos. 22 to 31 inclusive. Of drawings—(8) A set of elaborately coloured drawings on a *parabaik* (native paper book) of all the Nats; no names or descriptions; reproduced in facsimile in this work. (9) A bound set of pencil drawings of the Thirty-Seven Nats, with names and descriptions and occasional notes. (10) A bound set of fine pencil drawings of the Thirty-Seven Nats, with names and notes on each; reproduced on a reduced scale in this work. (11) A bound set of rough tentative pencil drawings of the Thirty-Seven Nats, with names. But there must be much more vernacular information available somewhere, for Taw Sein Ko informs us that there is a Book of Thirty-Seven Odes attached to the cult, unless, indeed, he means by this title the *Mahágítà Médanígyàn*.

One prominent fact came to my notice from the examination of the data available, *viz.*, that the various lists procured from all sorts of independent sources, were so nearly the same, both in the names of the Nats themselves and in the order in which they were given, that it may be taken for granted that there exists what may be called an authentic list. I have, therefore, taken that one which is to be found in a pamphlet containing a popular work, the *Mahágítà Médanígyàn*, printed at Rangoon in 1253 Burmese Era (*i.e.*, in 1891 A.D.), with a woodcut representing Aungzwámagyí Nat, No. 10, on the front cover, as my model and the most likely to be authentic. In numbering my images I have followed the enumeration given therein, and I may add that my numbering has been accepted by the competent Burmans to whose criticism it has been subjected. I now give what may be called the Authentic List:—

THE AUTHENTIC LIST OF NATS.

1. Thagyá Nat.
2. Mahágíri Nat.
3. Hnamàdawgyí Nat.
4. Shwé Nabé Nat.
5. Thónbàn Hlá Nat.
6. Taung-ngú Mingaung Nat.
7. Mintará Nat.
8. Thàndawgàn Nat.
9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat.
10. Aungzwámàgyí Nat.
11. Ngázíshin Nat.
12. Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat.
13. Taungmàgyí Nat.
14. Maung Minshin Nat.
15. Shindaw Nat.
16. Nyaung-gyin Nat.
17. Tabin Shwédí Nat.
18. Minyè Aungdin Nat.
19. Shwé Sippin Nat.
20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat.
21. Maung Pó Tú Nat.
22. Yun Bayin Nat.
23. Maung Minbyú Nat.
24. Màndalé Bódaw Nat.
25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat.
26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat.
27. Minthá Maung Shin Nat.
28. Tíbyúsaung Nat.
29. Tíbúsaung Mèdaw Nat.
30. Bayinmàshin Mingaung Nat.
31. Min Síthú Nat.
32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.
33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat.
34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.
35. Shingón Nat.
36. Shingwá Nat.
37. Shin-nèmí Nat.

In the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, Part I. Vol. II. p. 17, the same names as in the above list are given, but in a somewhat different order, which may be briefly compared thus:—

"Authentic List"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Upper Burma Gazetteer	1	2	3	4	6	5	26	27	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	28	29	30	31
"Authentic List"	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37			
Upper Burma Gazetteer	15	16	17	20	18	19	21	22	23	24	25	37	32	33	34	35	36			

The qualifications for admission into the authentic list are such as might be expected—great prominence, strong personality or striking performances during life; or one of the sudden, cruel, startling deaths, or tragic, terrifying fates, only too common in Burman, as in all Oriental, history.

Why the orthodox number of this Order of Nats is fixed at Thirty-Seven is an interesting question. It no doubt represents the Thirty-Three occupants of the Távatimsa (Trayastrimsa in Sanskrit and Táwadénthà in Burmese) Heaven of the old Indian and now Burmese Buddhism. The Pali word Távatimsa means "belonging to the Thirty-Three," and the Thirty-Three compose an Order of supernatural beings with Sakra, *i.e.* Thagyá, as their head, just as he is head of the modern Burmese Order of the Thirty-Seven Nats. In another view, which is a confused reference to the old Indian idea of the changing personality from time to time of the chief of a Buddhist heaven, every one of the Thirty-Three is a Thagyá, and in this view the head of the Thirty-Seven Nats for the time being is one of the Thagyás.

What I may call the natural grouping of the Nat stories historically, as will be seen later on, supports the view that the Order of Thirty-Seven is a national reference to the old Order of Thirty-Three, made in consequence of that attitude of mind which has induced the Burmese to fit all the classical names of the localities of Indian Buddhism on to territories and places of note within their own ken. Referring to the "Authentic List," I find that the stories group themselves thus :—

Group I.	2 to 5	13 to 14	37
Group II.	16	24 to 30	36
Group III.	7 to 12	19 to 20	...
.....	31 to 32	34 to	35
Group IV.	6 8	17 33	...
Group V.	15 18	22 to 23	...
Odd Nats	1(Thagyá)	.....	21

There are two ways, on this plan, of accounting for the four in excess in the Order of Thirty-Seven. In the first place, Nos. 35, 36, 37 are women with no particular story and more or less obviously thrown into the set. The story of No. 21 has no connection with any of the others. In the second place, Group V. relates to Nat stories of persons presumably alive in the 16th and 17th centuries A.D., and so they must all be very modern inventions or attributions. In either case, these Nats and their stories may be looked upon as thrown in to make the required number up to Thirty-Seven. It is also to be observed that the last four Nats, Nos. 34 to 37, are all women, whose stories may have been invented to complete the orthodox number, Thirty-Seven. According to the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, Part I. Vol. II. p. 17, the four superfluous Nats are the wife, sister and niece (Nos. 3, 4 and 37) of Mahágíri Nat (No. 2), and the younger brother (No. 26) of Shwébyin Naungdaw (No. 25). But all the above ideas are necessarily conjectures, and I give them merely as theories.

Taw Sein Ko has yet another way of accounting for what he calls the "indigenous pantheon" of Burma. "It consists of Thirty-Four Nats [*i.e.* (?) Thagyá and his Thirty-Three], but the number Thirty-Seven has attained a popular fixity because the Book of Odes [by which apparently he means the *Mahágìtà Médanìgyàn*, as already noted], chanted when offerings are made to them, consists of thirty-seven odes, some of the Nats having more than one ode devoted to them. The odes are, strictly speaking, short autobiographical sketches in metre, recited by mediums [*natkadaw*] when they are possessed, and are somewhat moral in their tendency, inasmuch as they impress on the audience the sins of treason, rebellion and assassination. In the case of Nats who were members of the royal family, they give a succinct account of their genealogy."

Taw Sein Ko also classifies his Thirty-Four Nats thus:—six ancient heroes and heroines, fourteen royalties, twelve officials of State, one "dealer in pickled tea, who traded with the Shan and Palaung States in the north-east of Burma," and one female white elephant (*i.e.* apparently Ngázíshin). The *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, *loc. cit.*, classes the Thirty-Seven Nats as twenty royal, sixteen poor and one merchant.

I may well close this discussion by an account of a MS. in the India Office, courteously placed at my disposal by the authorities for the present work, as it supports my "Authentic List," and throws generally much light on the subject of the Thirty-Seven Nats.

The MS. is contained in a thick folio volume (305-31 G.6) of the India Office Library, entitled "Burmese Drawings, Inscriptions, etc., presented by [the second] Lord Wynford in 1849," through Sir James Weir Hogg, at various periods Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The collection was apparently made between 1826 and 1832, or later, by someone interested in the operations after the First Burmese War of 1824 onwards. It consists, firstly, of 84 sheets of drawings of all sorts, relating to Burma, chiefly by native artists, mounted on cloth and arranged in folio form ; and secondly, of two vocabularies—a Burmese and a Latin-Burmese-English—of economic plants and products of the country in 26 folios. The volume commences with some squeezes of inscriptions, and descriptions of the pagoda as a building, and of Buddha's Foot," *sektaw-yábón*, (11 sheets). It then gives a series of astronomical figures, showing the Burmese adaptations of Indian ideas (10 sheets) ; representations of Court processions of the period, by land and water (9 sheets) ; Burmese pictorial ideas of the terrestrial, celestial and infernal worlds and their inhabitants, with representations of the planets (12 sheets of much importance). Then commences a long series of the Nats, including the Thirty-Seven, in many interesting and, at times, primitive forms (33 sheets). The whole series of drawings closes with early lithographs of views of Lower Burma (9 sheets). The collection is accompanied by many notes in pencil and ink in the hand of Professor H. H. Wilson, who, as Librarian, wrote the letter to the Court which announced the presentation.

For the present enquiry, the great interest and value of the MS. lies in its representations of the inhabitants of the worlds, two sets alike in detail, and in its pictures of the Nats. The worlds and their inhabitants are

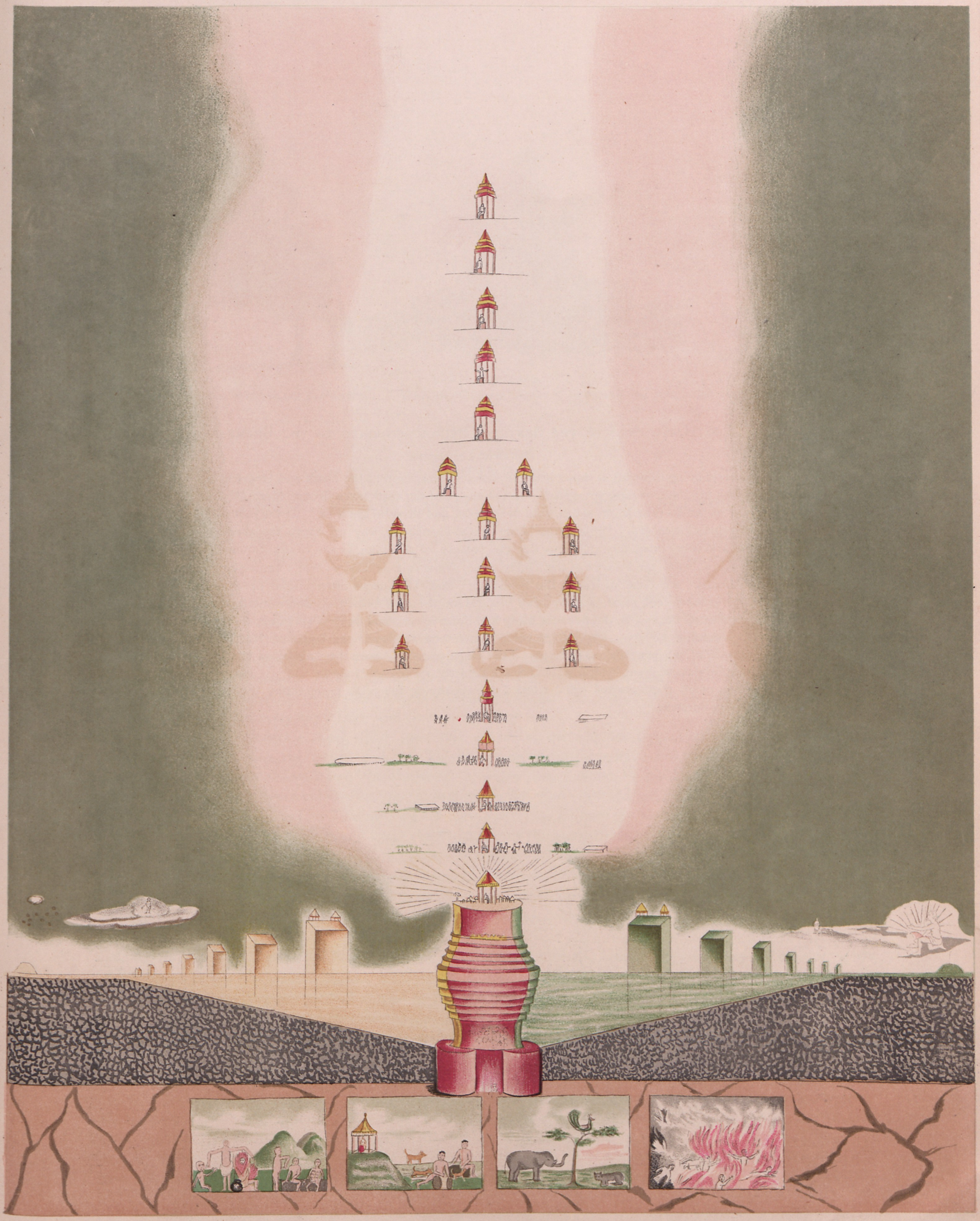
given in an ascending scale from the lowest to the highest, commencing with the Animal World and going successively up to the Haunting-Ghost World, the Fallen-Angel World, Hell and the World of Mankind, and then the Heavens, from the Chatumahárájika and Távatimsa to the Mahábrahmá, and on beyond that half-way house to the thirty-two abodes of the Formless Beings, Arúpabhúta.

In the great series of Nats are two sets, both obviously purporting to describe the Thirty-Seven. The first gives the list and names exactly as in my "Authentic List," except that my Nos. 29, 30, 31 and 32 are transposed as Nos. 31, 32, 30, 29. Ngázíshin Nat (No. 11) is repeated in an explanatory form at the end. This is the strongest corroboration of the accuracy of my "Authentic List." The second set also numbers thirty-seven, but is plainly a spurious one, as it is eked out with four *balús*, Varuna Nat Min, Thadó Minzaw, Kó Thén Shin (the Chin "Supreme Judge"), and so on, and it is in any kind of order. It, however, gives some of the Nats in important forms, explanatory of the stories connected with them. There are also scattered throughout the Nat pictures in the MS. valuable variants of the forms which the Thirty-Seven assume in consequence of the traditions current about them. The most interesting of the variants are reproduced in the present work, as are also many of the other Nat drawings which explain its subject.

Indian Gods as Nats (Burmanized).

1. Zingalà Nat (Jangala), the Recorder. 2. Lekkamí Nat (Lakshmí), the Treasure-guardian.
3. Narazat Nat (Narachakshu), the Personal-guardian. 4. Garápála Nat (Gharapála), the House-guardian.





THE HABITATIONS OF THE SENTIENT BEINGS ACCORDING TO THE BURMESE.

Buddhist Cosmogony.

The Habitations of the Sentient Beings according to the Burmese.

Buddhist Cosmogony.

The accompanying illustration shows how the Burmese imagine that the Earth and Heavens are inhabited. Below the earth are the four infernal regions. In the centre of the earth rises Mount Méru (Myinmó) with its ruby feet and its faces—ruby to the south, gold to the east, and silver to the west. At the foot of Mount Méru lies the habitation of mankind. High on the Mount, three-fourths the way up, above the abode of the *balús*, *nagás*, *galóns* and other imaginary creatures, lies the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, Zatumahárít. At the summit lies Táwadénthá, the Heaven of the Thirty-three, whose ruler is Thagyá Nat. Immediately above it in space lies Yámabón, the Land of Yama, the Restrainer; then Túthitá, so often visited by Buddha while on earth; then Némmánayadí, ruled over by Mán Nat (Mára, the Evil Principle), whose merits in former lives were so great that all the evil he does cannot bring him down lower; and next Wutháwadí, the highest heaven occupied by generating beings. Above these come the sixteen abodes of the Byammá Nats, the real angels of the Burmese, sentient beings who are corporeal but ungenerated. Above these again are the four abodes of the perfect or formless sentient beings, which are not depicted for obvious reasons.

The names of all these abodes will be found accompanying the plate representing the Sentient Beings according to the Burmese.



Nats of Indian Origin.

1. Mani Méghaláwara Nat-thamí (the Rain Goddess). 2. Yama Nat (Yama, the Restrainer). 3. Súlarata Nat (Súlé Natgyí, the Guardian of Rangoon).

CHAPTER IX.

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT OF THE NAT LEGENDS.



WE have now got so far on our enquiry as to have ascertained that the Thirty-Seven Nats are spirits of departed royalties of Burma or of their connections, and, therefore, before proceeding further, I must ask attention to a very brief outline of that portion of the exceedingly complicated history of Burma, which is covered by the stories connected with the Thirty-Seven Nats. I must, however, remind my readers that there are large portions of territory, forming part at various times of what has been known to us as the Burman Empire, which are not concerned with these Nat stories, such as the Shan States, Tenasserim, Arakan and Manipur. In explaining the history, I regret that I shall be forced to mention names and places which are uncouth and unfamiliar to most European ears, but still, I hope, with the aid of the map prepared for the purpose, to make my story clear and perhaps interesting.

There are three separate races which have had a hand in forming the Dynasties with which we are now concerned: the Burmans, the Shans and the Talaings. As races, they have occupied territories roughly as follows:—the Burmans, the valleys of the Irrawaddy and the Sittang above Prome and Tonghoo; the Talaings, the deltas of these two rivers below those points and of the Salween; and the Shans all the country in the hills to the eastward of Burma. The Talaings are an altogether Far Eastern people allied to the races populating Annam. The three races are all mixed up in the formation of the many dynasties that have held ephemeral sway over the whole or part of Burma, and have constantly ousted each other as ruling races, for a time, in practically all parts of it. Also, at times there have been overlords and subordinate kings, holding more or less independent power together, in the various chief towns or capitals, and these are all alike "kings" in the popular estimation and memory, a puzzling fact that has always to be kept in mind in attempting to grasp the facts of Burmese political history.

As in all Oriental history, the Burmese dynasties commence with two long consecutive lines of legendary kings of Tagaung, as the first general capital, followed by a long dynasty of Prome and later of Pagán, chiefly also legendary in the earlier portions, and alleged to be directly connected with the last dynasty of Tagaung. The Burmese dynasty is said to have commenced almost with the Buddhist era, in 483 B.C., and to have lasted till 1298 A.D., when it gave way to the Shan dynasty of Pinyá and Myinzaing. The Shan kings of Burma, however, claimed descent from, and close relationship with, the Burmese kings of Pagàn, whom they had ousted. Just before this period, the great conqueror of the Pagán dynasty, commonly known as Anawratházaw, wrested Pegu and Thatón from their Talaing rulers about 1050 A.D., and all Burma came under the sway of the Pagán dynasty till its fall. The Shan dynasty of Pinyá never held the Peguan territory of the old Pagán kingdom, and from it there broke off the Shan dynasty of Sagaing. Both the Shan dynasties thus set up gave way to the Burmese dynasty of Ava between 1352 and 1364, the members of which claimed descent from all their predecessors, *i.e.*, from the Burmans of Tagaung and Pagán and from the Shans of Pinyá and Sagaing. They, in turn, gave way

to the Burman king Bayin Naung of Pegu in 1551, who became Overlord of All Burma, reigning both in Pegu and Ava. This general dynasty lasted till 1751, when it was turned out for a short time by a Talaing dynasty of Shan origin, which had succeeded in ousting the Burmese from Pegu in 1740. They, in turn, were ousted from all Burma in 1757 by what is generally known as the Alompra dynasty, claiming an apocryphal royal descent from Tagaung. Of the Alompra dynasty the last member was King Thibaw, deposed by the English in 1885. This dynasty reigned successively at Shwebo, Sagaing, Ava, Amarapúra and Mandalay.

The Burman conqueror, Bayin Naung of Pegu, claimed royal descent thus. On the break up of the Burman dynasty of Pagán in 1298, the discontented Burmese nobility formed a chief nucleus of power at Tonghoo and a minor one at Prome, which led to the foundation of the Burman dynasty of Tonghoo. This took its rise about 1313 and culminated in Tabin Shwédí, who conquered Pegu from the Shan dynasty in 1540, setting up the Burman dynasty of Pegu, which lasted as such till 1599. Of this, the great monarch was the conqueror Bayin Naung. Tabin Shwédí and Bayin Naung were relatives, both claiming descent from the Burman dynasty of Pagán.

The story of the Talaing dynasties of the Delta at Thatón and Pegu is wrapt in much obscurity, but they are said to have lasted from 573 A.D. to about 1050, when they gave way to Anawratházaw of Pagán. On the break up of the Pagán dynasty, a Shan dynasty was established at Martaban and Pegu in 1287, and was that which was destroyed by the Burman, Tabin Shwédí, in 1526. It may be interesting to note here that it was Tabin Shwédí's dynasty at Pegu that was known so well to the early European travellers and settlers in Burma, and it was his race of Tonghoo that was known to them as the kings of Brahma or Burma.

Now the system of the great overlords of Ava and Pegu was to govern outlying provinces by means of tributary kings. Thus, Tabin Shwédí set up subordinate kings at Ava, Prome, Tonghoo and Martaban. Bayin Naung, reigning at Pegu, did much the same thing, and so did the kings of the general Burman dynasty which succeeded him, with Ava for its capital. So that when one hears in legend or story of a king of Prome or Tonghoo, one has always to ascertain if he was really the king thereof, or only a member of a tributary line more or less independent of its overlord.

What, therefore, has to be carried in the head for the right comprehension of the Nat stories is roughly this. There were legendary Burman kings at Tagaung, followed by a connected Burman dynasty at Prome and then Pagán from 483 B.C. to 1298 A.D., followed in its turn by two contemporary Shan lines at Pinyá and Sagaing up to 1364. With the last two was a contemporary Burman line at Tonghoo from 1313 to 1540, which, at that date, became absorbed into the Burman dynasty of Pegu. The Shan lines of Pinyá and Sagaing became merged in the Burman line of Ava, which was upset by the Burman dynasty of Pegu in 1551. This then became a general dynasty of Pegu and Ava from 1581 to 1751, giving way to a Shan dynasty of Pegu, which was soon conquered by the last Burman dynasty of Alompra, lasting from 1757 to 1885. There was also a Talaing dynasty of Thatón and Pegu from 573 to 1050, when the country became tributary to the Burmese Pagán dynasty till 1287, when a Shan dynasty was set up at Pegu, till it was ousted by the Burman Tonghoo line in 1540. Pegu then became merged in the Burmese Ava dynasty till 1740, when for seventeen years a second Shan line was established there, giving way finally to the Alompra dynasty in 1757.

The Burma of this history is not a very large territory, and these lines of kings occupied capitals not far apart. Tagaung and Shwebo are to the north. Then come Ava, Sagaing, Myinzaing, Pinyá, Amarapúra and Mandalay, almost within a stone's throw of each other. Not far south lie Pagán, Tonghoo and Prome. The rest, Martaban, Thatón, Pegu and finally Rangoon (which, though it has long been a veritable Mecca for Buddhists, was never really a native capital), are at no great distance apart to the extreme south. At all these places are signs and buildings innumerable, including inscriptions by the hundred, of the dynasties that once held sway in them, all in a more or less useful state of preservation. Both the ruins and the inscriptions await the hand of some fortunate future explorers, who will find themselves aided in their efforts by a great number of local *thamaings*, or monastic chronicles, of a general accuracy by no means to be despised.

I have been obliged thus to go into the outlines of Burmese history, as without this much knowledge of it, it would be impossible to understand the stories of the Thirty-Seven Nats and the innumerable references, both correct and incorrect, to local history contained in them. For the elucidation of the stories themselves, I shall now divide them into five groups, more or less connected with each other, excluding from the groups two Nats who are not directly or indirectly connected with historical royal personages. The two exceptions are Thagyá Nat (No. 1), a purely mythological personage, as already explained, and Maung Pó Tú Nat (No. 21), who was a trader killed by a tiger near Pinyá during, I suppose, the period when it was a capital, *i.e.*, between 1298 and 1364 A.D.

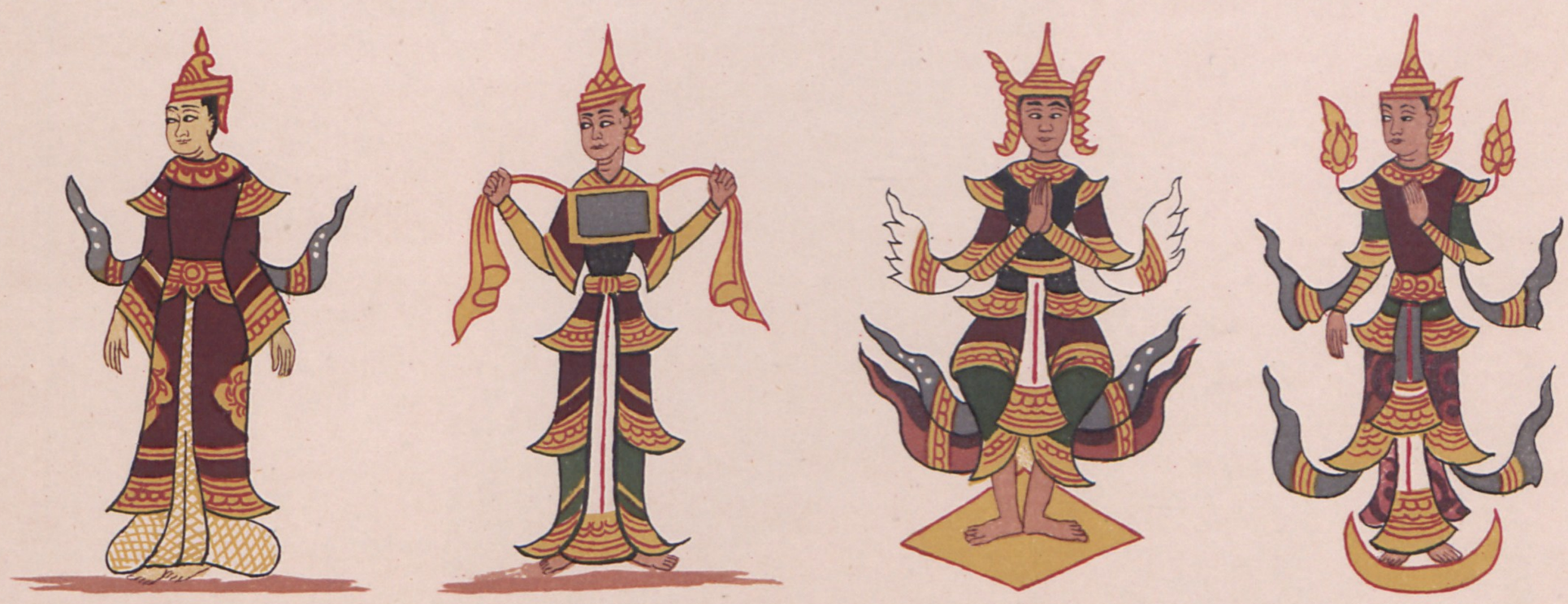
I shall next proceed to describe the stories in each group as they are told, and explain briefly their historical references, after which I shall explain the illustrations group by group. Group I., which may be called the

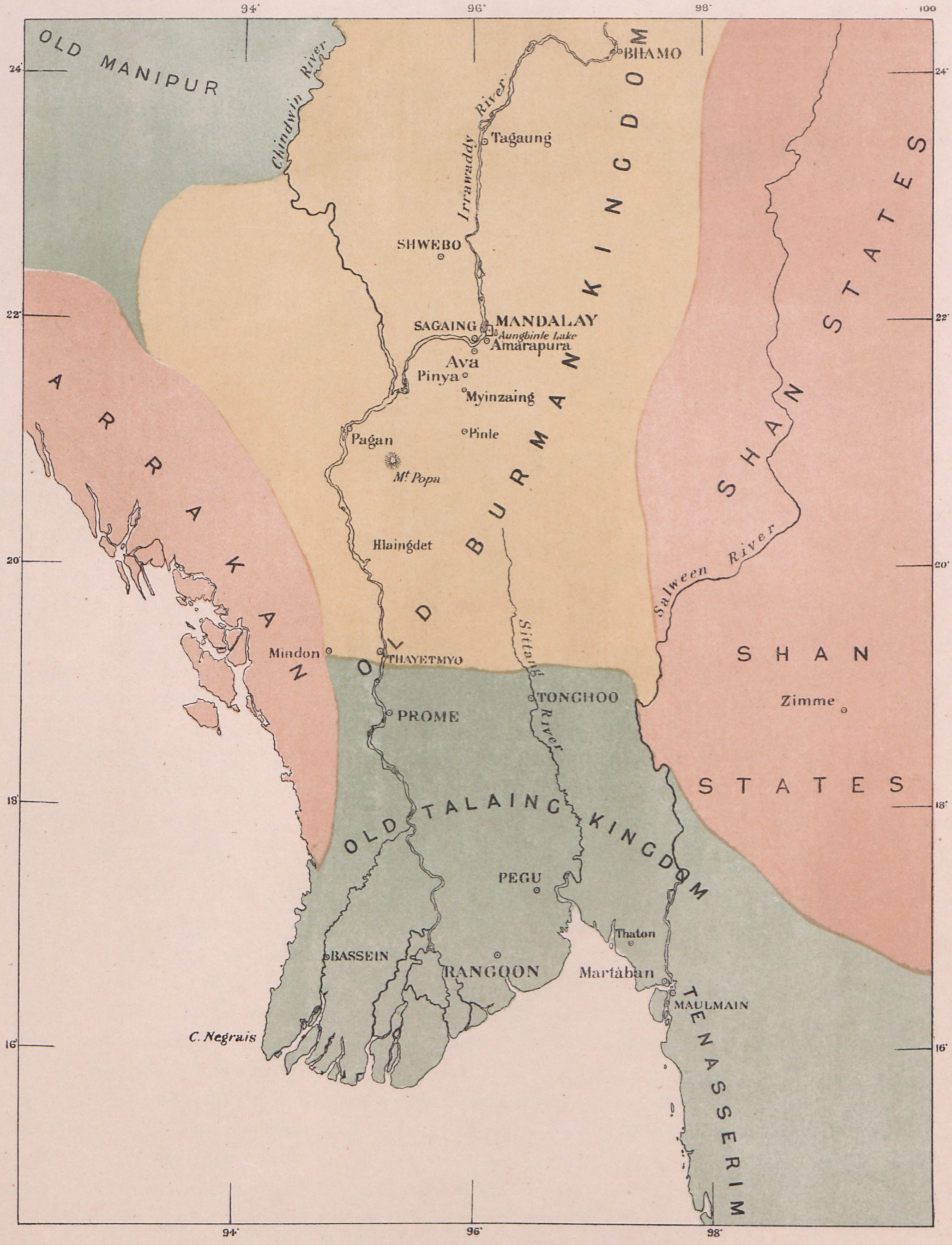
Duttabaung Cycle, relates to the old legendary Burman dynasty of Tagaung and Prome, and centres about that old-world hero of Burma, King Duttabaung of Prome, ostensibly carrying us back to the days about the foundation of the Buddhist era in the 6th century B.C. Group II., or the Anawratházaw Cycle, purports to relate to the immediate surroundings of the Conqueror Anawratházaw of Pagán in the 11th century A.D., but in reality it wanders about in a confused kind of way amongst his immediate predecessors and descendants. Group III., or the Ava Mingaung and Pagán Alaungsíthú mixed Cycle, is meant to relate to the Burman dynasty of Ava (1364-1551) in the 15th century. But the stories have become so confused in their references as to equally relate to the days of Alaungsíthú of Pagán, a great name in Burmese history, and his successors of the 12th and 13th centuries; to the much earlier kings of Pagán of the 8th century; and to the Shans of Pinyá in the 15th century. Group IV., or the Tabin Shwédí Cycle, relates to the great Tabin Shwédí of Tonghoo and Pegu himself, and the contemporary subordinate dynasty of Prome in the 16th century. Group V., or the Bayin Naung Cycle, relates to even later dates connected with Bayin Naung of Pegu and Ava and his successors of the Ava-Pegu dynasty (1581-1751) in the 16th and 17th centuries.

I would draw special attention to the exceedingly modern nature of many of these stories. The centuries B.C., the 8th, and even the 11th century A.D. might be legitimate dates for legendary stories of spirits; but the bulk of these tales belongs to the period contained between the 12th and 17th centuries A.D., so late a date as 1558 being well authenticated for one story, and the still later date of about 1620 being hardly doubtful for another. Even so recent a Conqueror as Tabin Shwédí, reigning from 1530 to 1550, during the time of our own King Henry VIII., and well known to the earlier European settlers in Pegu, who actually fought for and against him in considerable numbers, is himself a prominent Nat.

Nats of Indian Origin.

1. Zalathinga Nat (Jarásandha, the Opponent of Krishna). 2. Wámathúya Nat (Vámasúra, Káma, Cupid).
3. Baliyáza Nat (Bali, Lord of the Infernal Regions). 4. Nayéndádéwa Nat (Sóma, the Moon as a God).





THE BURMA OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN NATS.





Image of Mahágíri Nat (No. 2), the Blacksmith, in the Shwézígón Pagoda at Pagán about 1826, showing Indian origin.

CHAPTER X.

THE DUTTABAUNG CYCLE.



GROUP I. of the Thirty-Seven Nats, or the Duttabaung Cycle, consists of Nats Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 14, and 37. That is, it consists of seven Nats with a truly folklore story connected with the early hero, King Duttabaung of Prome. Hence I have called it the Duttabaung Cycle. The outline of the legend is as follows:—Nga Tindè, the Burmese Samson, a blacksmith by trade, was treacherously burnt alive by the King of Tagaung, who had married his sister, Mà Sawmè. She thereupon burnt herself with her brother. Nga Tindè married the daughter of the Sea-serpent (Yénagá), and by her he had two sons, who grew up out of two eggs, and were killed in a boxing match ordered by King Duttabaung of Prome. King Duttabaung had a wife of great beauty, whom, owing to a calumny, he neglected and forced to earn her living as a weaver, but he nevertheless had a daughter by her, who died with her mother. All the personages mentioned in the above legend, except Duttabaung himself, became Nats.

The Nats whose origin is in this legend are:—No. 2, Mahágíri Nat, who is Nga Tindè, the gigantic blacksmith; No. 3, Hnamàdawgyí Nat, also known as Golden-cheeks (Shwé-myet-hna) and Taung-gyí Shin, is his sister, Mà Sawmè, whose title as queen was Thíriwundá of Tagaung; No. 4, Shwé Nabé Nat is his wife, the Sea-serpent's daughter; Nos. 13 and 14, Taungmàgyí Nat and Maung Shinbyú Nat, known jointly as the Kúdaw Shin, are their sons, Shin Byú and Shin Nyó; No. 5, Thónbàn Hlá Nat (the Surpassing Beauty), whose title was the Okkalábá Queen, is Duttabaung's neglected wife; and No. 37, Shin-nèmí Nat, is her daughter. Mahágíri Nat, as Min Mágayé, is universal, for he is the En-saung Nat, the guardian of the home. "For his comfort the tops of all the posts in the house are covered with a hood of white cotton cloth, for it is in this situation that he usually takes up his abode. In almost every house, at the end of the verandah in front, you will find a water-

pot full of *payét-yé*, holy water, over which certain *gáthas* [Páli texts], magic spells, or religious formulæ have been uttered by the astrologer, or by the prior of the district. This water, which is replenished once a month, or oftener in cases of danger by disease, or when a member of the family is absent on a journey, is every now and then sprinkled about the house as a protection against *belús* [ogres], spectres, and *tasés* [ghosts]. When the water is consecrated in the *nyaungyé-ó* [holy-water vessel], which is of a special shape, something like an overgrown Indian spittoon, there are always a few twigs and leaves of the *thabyé-bin* [the sacred *eugenia*] floating on the top. These are mostly taken out and hung round about the eaves, but occasionally left in the water. The inordinately superstitious sometimes keep a small *thabyé-bin* growing in a pot in the house, so that its benign influence may keep harm away.

"Talaing houses may usually be known by the cocoa-nut hanging up at the south side of the building. This is covered with strips and tags of yellow or red cloth, and is offered to Min Mágayé, whom they call the King of the Nats. Of these spirits, called *kalúk* in Talaing, they say there are thirty-seven distinct varieties, but Min Mágayé rules them all. At the beginning of the wet season, they always wrap up the cocoa-nut afresh, and when the rains are over make new offerings of money, glutinous rice, eggs, jaggary [molasses, coarse sugar], and fruit, in order that the En-saung Nat [or House Guardian] may keep away fever from the household.

"It must not be supposed that the Nat guardian of the house has necessarily any affection for those who have built the place where he has taken up his abode. He probably regards them only with cold indifference, however generous they may be in their offerings, and were he not propitiated by these gifts he would almost certainly display his anger by doing the inhabitants some grievous injury. But then he dislikes his human haunts being intruded upon, and if a stranger comes at an unwonted time, a burglar at midnight for example, it is quite likely that the En-saung Nat will attack him violently, scare him out of his wits, or give him the colic. Thus, without any really estimable purpose in his mind, Min Mágayé may be a considerable protection to his worshippers."

Taw Sein Ko gives a version of the Mahágíri Legend, which is valuable in several ways. He writes:—"The pantheon is headed by the Mahágíri Nat, Maung Tindè; his wife, Shwé Nabé; his sister, Thónbàn Hlà or Shwé Myet-hná; and his niece, Shin-nèmí. Maung Tindè was the son of a blacksmith, Maung Tindaw of Tagaung, an ancient capital to the north of Mandalay. The young man was noted for his great bravery and physical strength, and the king of Tagaung feared that he might become a potential centre of disaffection. He therefore ordered that Maung Tindè should be captured and killed. His would-be victim, however, eluded capture for a long time and remained in hiding. The king then resorted to a stratagem, which is still common in Oriental countries. He conferred honour on Maung Tindè's sister by assigning her a place in his seraglio. After a lapse of some time, the queen was cajoled into negociating the surrender of her brother on condition that high office should be conferred on him. Relying on the royal offer of pardon, Maung Tindè surrendered himself. But the king did not keep his word. He himself superintended the burning of his dupe under a *sagábin* [jasmine] tree. Loud were the plaintive cries uttered by Maung Tindè, and his sister, hearing them, rushed to his rescue and met with her death. The cruel king attempted to save the life of his queen, but only succeeded in pulling her head off by the hair. After their death, the spirits of these two, brother and sister, became powerful Nats and inhabited the *sagábin* tree. Such was their evil influence that every human being or animal that approached the tree died mysteriously. The matter was in due course reported to the king, and he directed that the haunted tree should be cut down by the roots and sent adrift down the river Irrawaddy. The order was carried out and the tree was stranded at Pagán, where Thinlígyaung was reigning as king. This happened in the fourth [? sixth] century A.D. The Nats apprised the king in a dream of their sorrowful plight and asked him to provide them with a home. In compliance with this request, the stranded tree, the trunk only now remaining, was taken to Pópá Hill, which is of volcanic origin and the highest elevation in Burma. It was divided into two parts, each being about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. Human features were delineated on these pieces of wood with gold leaf, and the rude images were respectfully deposited in appropriate temples. Thenceforward the worship of these Nats became a popular institution, recognised and sanctioned by royalty. Subsequently, at the request of the Nats, made through their Shamans, King Thinlígyaung had golden heads made to represent them, conferred the rank and insignia of a prince of the blood royal on Maung Tindè and those of a princess on his sister, and made to them annual offerings regularly. It is evident that since this worship was inaugurated, animal sacrifices and offerings of alcoholic spirits were made to these Nats, for Burmese history records that in December, 1555 A.D., the Hanthawadí Sinbyúyin [Bayin Naung], the Branginoco of the early European writers, reached Pagán in the course of his progress through the newly-conquered dominions, and witnessed the festival in honour of the Mahágíri Nat and his sister. Noticing that intoxicants and sacrifices of white buffaloes, white oxen and white goats were being made to the Nats, he commanded that such practices should henceforth cease, because it was opposed to the humanitarian doctrines of Buddhism, and because it would entail suffering in hell

on those who practised it. In 1785 A.D., Bódawphayá, the great-great-grandfather of the last king of Burma, had new golden heads of the Nats made, and these were replaced in 1812 by the same king with larger and more finished heads of the same metal, weighing in the aggregate about $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. These last heads are still in existence and are being worshipped by the people."

As this is the most important Nat legend of all, I here quote from the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, Part I., Vol. II. p. 19f., the version usually received :—"The story told varies slightly, but the main points agree in all districts, and the popular version is given here rather than the bald statement of the Nat-book [*Mahágítà Médanígyàn*]. In the reign of Tagaung Min, the king who took his name from his capital Tagaung, or Old Pagán, as it is frequently called, there lived in that city a blacksmith, by name Nga Tindaw, who had a son and a daughter. The son was named Nga Tindè, and he was celebrated throughout the whole kingdom as the cleverest blacksmith and the most powerful man of his age. He had great influence in Tagaung and the king was afraid of him, and feared that he would raise a rebellion. In order to conciliate the blacksmith, the king married Nga Tindè's sister and gave her the title of Thíriwundá, but still he remained uneasy in his mind and finally told the queen to summon her brother to the palace to receive an appointment. When Nga Tindè came he was seized by the royal guard, bound to a *sagábin* [yellow jasmine, *champac*], a tree which grew in the palace yard, and burned to death. The queen begged permission to bid farewell to her brother, went up to the burning pile, threw herself into the flames and perished with him. The fire was put out at once, but both brother and sister were dead and all that remained of them was their two heads, which had not been in any way injured by the flames. The brother and sister became Nats and took up their abode in the *sagábin* tree, which grew within the palace walls. From this they descended periodically and killed and ate people, particularly those who came near the tree. After this had gone on for some time, the king had the tree uprooted and thrown into the Irrawaddy River. The tree floated down with the current as far as Pagán, where it stranded on the river bank close to one of the city gates. Thinlígyaung was then king of Pagán, and to him they showed themselves one night, but not before they had killed and eaten every one who came near the tree. They displayed their human heads and told Thinlígyaung of the cruelty of the king of Tagaung. He took pity on them and ordered that a suitable temple should be built on Pópá Hill to receive the Mahágíri[1] Nats and their tree. This was done and the tree was removed to its present position near Pópá, where a portion of it is said still to exist. The Nats, when they were thus properly housed and treated, gave up active destruction and only attacked those who directly offended them. To further propitiate them, the king ordered that every year in the month of *Nayón* (June), a great feast should be held in their honour. This festival was regularly kept up until the time of Bódawphayá [1785-1819 A.D.], who presented two golden heads to the shrine, to be kept by the official in charge of the Pópá neighbourhood, and to be brought out every year for the festival. On the day appointed for the feast, the golden heads were carried to the spirit temple. All the officials and people from all parts of the surrounding country gathered together and marched in procession, headed by bands of music and dancers. Ministers were also specially deputed from the Court in Ava or Mandalay to attend the feast with offerings. When the shrine was reached, the heads were placed on the altar and various offerings were made to them, and certain propitiatory rites gone through, after which the heads were restored to the charge of the proper official. These heads were removed on the British occupation to the Pagán treasury, where they were kept for some years. The special festival has ceased, and the golden heads of Mahágíri are now to be seen in the Bernard Free Library in Rangoon. The Mahágíri Nats were of great service to King Kyanyitthá [1057-1085 A.D.], both before and after he succeeded to the throne of Pagán. In recognition of this, he issued an edict that all his subjects should honour these two Nats by suspending a cocoanut to them in their houses.

"The brother has assumed the sole credit in many places and figures as the En-saung Nat, the *lar familiaris*. In every Burman house, not merely in Upper Burma, but even in Rangoon, the cocoanut representing him will be found hung up. It is usually placed in a square bamboo frame, and over the top of the cocoanut is placed a piece of red cloth which represents a turban. When there is any sickness in the house or in the family, the cocoanuts are inspected. The special points are that the water, or milk, should not have dried up, and that the stalk should still be intact. If anything is amiss, a fresh cocoanut is hung up."

A poetical version of the story of Mahágíri Nat and his sister Thónbàn Hlá Nat is given in the *Soul of a People*, p. 297ff., as the Nats *par excellence* of the isolated and much dreaded volcanic eminence in Upper Burma known as the Pópá Hill.

As regards the cult of this group of Nats, the *Mahágítà Médanígyàn* says that a proper shed must be erected, in which plays are performed. While these are going on, the *natkadaws*, or *clairvoyantes* representing the Nats, are dressed to represent their several parts, as described in the appropriate chants or *Nat-than*, with young leaves of the *thabyé* tree in their left hands. These they lay down, and then come forward, holding in the

[1] It is to be noted that Mahágíri signifies the Great Mountain.

left hand a *phalásón* or betel-box, and in the right a goblet of water, and prostrate themselves three times, rising to their feet before each prostration. Then, putting down the box and the goblet, they sing the *Nat-than* or *Chant of the Nat*:—

"Here do I come, radiant with flowing girdle and satin [*pasó*] loin-cloth of foreign make,[1] with white muslin cloak and ample sleeves. In my right hand I hold a fan and my helmet is made of palm-leaf gilt with pure gold. Aforetime I was living in Tagaung, whose ruler suspected me causelessly of harbouring evil designs against him. He commanded his Ministers to arrest me and put me to death; therefore I was forced to go and hide me in the jungle. Then the king bethought him of a stratagem. He made my sister Saw Mèyá his chief queen and tempted me back by promise of the office of governor of the capital. When I came back he caused me to be tied to a *sagábin* tree and there I was burned alive, for sword and spear were alike powerless to do me harm. Thus did I become a Nat. My sister, whom I dearly loved, was named Shin Dwè-hlà or Saw Mèyá, and now I am known as Mahágíri or Maung Tindè. I pray you of your courtesy let your love for a man of the upper country be as sweet as honey in the Court." Here are introduced instructions to the band to strike up the appropriate music.

"The lady of the golden palace is worthy of love for her grace and beauty. The glory of His Majesty is as that of the sun in all his splendour and magnificence, yet, though he thus shines with refulgence, he beams on the people with a fragrance and a cooling breath like unto a fresh breeze, laden with the odours of the wild jasmine. Hence it is that the countries which own his royal sway are many and varied, and therefore is his capital happy and prosperous. The great mountains of rock covered with *sal* and *malla* trees are now the dwelling-place of the Nats. Their retreat is gorgeous with gems and responds to the prosperity of the country. There live Her Majesty the Chief Queen, the lady of the Golden Palace, and there also lives her mighty brother, renowned for his valour and for the strength of his body. These two are by Royal Decree rulers over a stretch of country, over which they keep watch and ward. By Royal Command issued at the desire of a high-born queen, the Chief Queen, whose birth was lowly, was consigned to the flames with her brother and was burned to death. The mighty mountain [Pópá] is now the abode of their ghosts." Then the music breaks in and a frenzied dance begins.

The Chief Queen, the Hnamàdaw Taung-gyí Shin, or Shwé Myet-hná Nat is, at Pópá at any rate, always worshipped along with her brother. But she has a chant of her own. The *Nat-than* in her honour runs as follows:—

"With a white scarf wound round my head, a jacket embroidered in silver and gold with wide fringes and tight sleeves, a cotton petticoat [*tamén*] with an ornamental border, and a gold-laced girdle, I, the Queen of Tagaung, the fondly loved and blameless daughter of the *Myothúgyí* [head or mayor] of Tagaung, Maung Tindaw, have decked myself and come. I was a true sister to Shin Dwè-hla, who was younger than I, and now I live on Pópá Hill with my loving brother Nat, Maung Tindè, who all for his mighty strength and vigour was tied to a tree and burnt, though I pleaded sore that he was brother-in-law to the king. Then in my grief did I hasten to the burning pile and threw myself into the flames. They strove to save me, but all they saved was my head, which parted from my body. Then did I become a Nat, and among the Nats I am known as Golden-cheeks. The king buried us beneath the flowering tree in the palace courtyard; brother and sister he buried us there. But there came the many, there came the foolish, there was no place for the viewless spirits of the air. Therefore the tree was torn up; by the roots was it uprooted; with its roots it was cast into the mighty river. It floated down the river; it was borne by the great Irrawaddy; the floods bore it to the north-gate landing-place of the palace at Pagán. There we saw the king; there we told our tale, and Thinlígyaung, the king, gave us all Pópá for our realm." Then to the "appropriate music" already mentioned, begin what a worthy Burmese official has called "the enthusiastic dances of the Nat-inspired females."

What may be called the historical aspect of this legend is also clearly mythological. According to the *Mahávázawin* or Burmese *Chronicles*, the reign of King Duttabaung of Prome is placed at 442-372 B.C., and he is stated to be the son of Mahátthambawá, the eldest of the blind twin sons of the last King of Tagaung. And as to these twins, there is a legend of the river-borne foundling type, most likely the same in origin as that of the Nat sons of Nga Tindè, who are mixed up in story with King Duttabaung. Duttabaung himself is said to have been drowned in a vessel off Nágarít (Cape Negrais), in the whirlpool where the Sea-serpent (Yénagá) drags down ships to destruction; a story which recalls the Sea-serpent wife of Nga Tindè, the mother of the twin Nats. Indeed, about the first four of these "historical" Nats (Nos. 2 to 5) and also about their connections, Nos. 13 and 14, there are many popular legends generally current among the people, as the cult of this group is almost universal.

[1] The medium representing a male Nat wears a male dress.

The relationship in the legends can be made clearer by the accompanying Genealogy.

Father, unknown, lived at Yetaung in the Thayetmyo District.

- Nga Tindè, No. 2. Mahágíri Nat. = No. 4. Shwé Nabé Nat, the Sea-serpent's daughter.
  - Shin Byú, No. 14. Maung Shinbyú Nat.
  - Shin Nyo, No. 13. Taungmàgyí Nat.
- Mà Sawmè, Queen Thíriwundá of Tagaung, No. 3. Hnamàdawgyí or Shwé Myet-hná Nat.
  - King Duttabaung of Prome, 442-372 B.C. = Queen Okkalábá of Pegu, No. 5. Thónbàn Hlá Nat.
    - No. 37. Shin-nèmí Nat, a daughter, who died at Tabauk Tawyet.
- Mà Dwé-hlá.

I may now proceed to describe the illustrations of Group I., or the Duttabaung Cycle, with a brief note on the popular legend attached to each.



No. 2. Mahágíri Nat.

No. 2. Mahágíri Nat. One Nga Tindaw, a blacksmith of Yetaung on the Irrawaddy, not far north of Prome, had a son named Nga Tindè and two daughters named Mà Sawmè and Mà Dwé-hlá. Nga Tindè was a man of great strength, said in the *Annals of Tagaung* to be able to wield a hammer weighing 60 viss (210 lbs.). The noise of his anvil was heard in the king's palace, and the king ordered the valiant blacksmith to be brought before him, but he fled into the jungle. So the king married his sister Mà Sawmè, to whom he gave the title of Thíriwundá, and made her his chief queen, and then persuaded Nga Tindè to return, on a promise of making him a high official. But when Nga Tindè did return he was tied to a jasmine tree (*sagábin*) and burnt alive. After his death, Nga Tindè became a Nat and has ever since been worshipped with offerings at a yearly festival in December. This Nat is represented standing in Court dress of a high class, with and without the official head-dress, with a drawn sword and fan; supported by three *balús* on a kneeling or standing elephant.

As *balús* will frequently be mentioned hereafter, I would here note that the modern Burmese *balú* seems to be a confused reference to the Indian Brahmanical and then Buddhist ogre (Sanskrit *rákshasa*, Pali *rakkhasa*, Burmese *yekkaik*), the malignant Buddhist superhuman being *yakkha* (Sanskrit *yaksha*), and some local pre-Buddhist sprite of the people. This sort of confusion has occurred in modern Kashmir and elsewhere.

No. 3. Hnamàdawgyí Nat, also known as Shwé Myet-hná Nat, or Golden-cheeks, and Taung-gyí Shin Nat. When Mà Sawmè, as Queen Thíriwundá, heard that her brother was being burnt in the jasmine tree, she rushed



No. 3. Hnamàdawgyi Nat.



No. 4. Shwé Nabé Nát.

into the fire, and all the king could save of her was her head. After death, she and her brother lived in the jasmine (*michelia champaca*) as Nats at Tagaung, where they did much harm to the people. So the king had the tree felled and thrown into the river. It floated down to Pagán, where it grounded near the Kuppayawgá Gate. It was taken out of the river by Thalakhyaung Min (*i.e.*, Thinlígyaung-ngè of Pagán, 520-529 A.D.), who took it to the Pópá Mountain, where I am assured that their heads in gold are still to be seen. Their festival is in December. This Nat is represented as a woman, standing in Court dress of a high class, sometimes with a *nagá* (serpent) head-dress, supported by a *balú* on a kneeling or standing elephant.

No. 4. Shwé Nabé Nat. She was born at Mindón and was the daughter of the Sea-serpent (Yénagá). She went to worship at a footprint of Gaudama (Buddha) in the form of a woman. Here she met Nga Tindè, while he was hiding in the jungle, and became his wife. They had two sons, Taungmagyí and Myauk Minshinbyú. She died of grief at her husband's failure to return to her after he had started to visit his sister at Tagaung. This Nat is represented as a girl standing on a lotus throne, in Court dress of a high class, with a *nagá* head-dress.

No. 13. Taungmàgyí Nat and No. 14. Maung Minshin Nat, also known as Maung Shinbyú Nat and Taungmàgyí Myauk Minshinbyú Nat. Nga Tindè's serpent wife brought forth two eggs near the Munlè River, which were found by a hermit and taken home. After a while, two boys came forth out of the two eggs, and



No. 13. Taungmàgyí Nat.



No. 14. Maung Minshin Nat.

were called Shinbyú and Shin-nyó. King Duttabaung of Prome was told by his Brahman astrologers that two powerful men would soon be forthcoming to overthrow him, and so he had a search made for them. They were brought to him by a hunter, and he ordered them to fight out a boxing-match, possibly as a measure of policy. During the struggle, the younger of the brothers died and became the Nat Taungmàgyí, while the elder one died soon afterwards and became the Nat Shinbyú or Maung Minshin, showing the wisdom of the policy. They were



No. 5. Thónbàn Nat.



No. 37. Shin-nèmi Nat.

each said to have six hands, and there are figures of them set up to the east of Prome, under the name of Kúdaw Shin. This pair of Nats are represented as a couple of soldiers standing on lotus thrones in Court costume. The arms in each case hold a quoit, a *dah* or sword, and a couple of spears. The six arms plainly show the Indian origin of the cult of the pair.

No. 5. Thónbàn Nat, also known as Thónbàn-hlá Nat, Surpassing Beauty. She was born at Hantháwadí (Pegu) and was able to change her form three times a day. She was taken to King Duttabaung of Thírikhettayá (Prome), who had heard of her beauty. But his queens bribed the officers to say that she was a giantess and so big that the palace gates would have to be widened to admit her. So he ordered that she was to be kept in a large house outside the gate, where she earned a livelihood as a weaver. Here she built a pagoda called Limmàgyí Phayá, and planted a tree, known as the Limmàgyíbin. She was thus deserted by her husband, and after death her loom and its belongings turned into a rock, which is still to be seen. Her title as queen was Okkalábá. This Nat is represented as a girl, standing in the Court dress of a royal attendant, with and without the *nagá* head-dress, supported by a Burmanised representation of the Brahmanic elephant-headed god Ganéśa, kneeling or standing on a *balú* driving a standing elephant. The Indian origin of this cult is therefore obvious.

No. 37. Shin-nèmi Nat. She was the daughter of Queen Okkalábá, otherwise known as Thónbàn-hlá, and died at the same time as her mother at Tabauk Tawyet and became a Nat. This Nat is represented as a stout girl, with *nagá* head-dress, standing in ordinary Court dress.

Shwé Nabé (No. 4), the Sea-Serpent's daughter, wife of Mahágíri Nat.





Varieties of the Thirty-seven Nats.

1. Akyódaw and Nyídaw (the Shwébyin Brothers, Nos. 25 and 26). 2. Mandalé Bódaw (their Brahman Guardian, No. 24).
3. Min Akhyí and Min Angè (the Shwébyin Brothers, Nos. 25 and 26).

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANAWRATHAZAW CYCLE.



GROUP II., or Anawratházaw Cycle, consists of Nats Nos. 16, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 36, that is, of nine Nats, whose story purports to centre round the great conqueror, King Anawratházaw of Pagán. Hence my name for the Cycle. The outline of this group of legends is as follows :—King Kyaungbyú Min of Pagán had three sons, two by one queen, named Kyízó and Súkadé, who deposed their father, and by another queen a third younger one, Anawratházaw, who became a great conqueror. Kyízó succeeded first and was accidentally killed, and afterwards Súkadé was slain and dethroned by Anawratházaw. Anawratházaw had in his service two brothers, named the elder and the younger Shwébyin, natives of India, whom he sent to fetch a holy tooth-relic from China, but slew on their return for resisting his orders. They had a guardian, who was a Brahman and minister to the king, with the title of Mandalé Bódaw. He and his sister were slain at the same time as the brothers.

There are two other connected legends relating to this period. Firstly, King Yinzaw, or Yèzaw, of Pagán had a son, Maung Shin, who was killed while swinging. Secondly, Manuhà, King of Thatón, was conquered by Anawratházaw, and he and his family were all turned into pagoda slaves at Pagán, where one of them died of leprosy.

Of the above-mentioned personages, the wife of King Kyaungbyú Min and her sons, Kyízó and Súkadé, and also Maung Shin, all became Nats. So did the Brahman minister, his sister and his two wards. The leper Prince of Thatón also became a Nat.

The Nats rising out of this group of legends are:—No. 28, Tibyúsaung Nat, who is King Sókkadá or Súkadé. No. 30, Yómàshin Mingaung Nat, called also Bayinmáshin Mingaung Nat, is King Kyízó. No. 29, Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat, is their mother. No. 27, Minthá Maung Shin Nat, is their brother. Nos. 25 and 26 are the two Indian brothers known as the Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat (the elder) and Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat (the younger). No. 24, Mandalé Bódaw Nat, is their Brahman guardian, who is also known as Kyetyók. No. 36, Shingwá Nat, is his sister. No. 16, Nyaung-gyin Nat is the leper relative of King Manuhà of Thatón.

The Shwébyin brothers are perhaps the most popular of all the Nats, and are regarded everywhere, in Upper Burma at any rate, as Shwébyingyí and Shwébyinngè, the elder and the younger Shwébyin. They are usually represented in the villages as gaudily dressed puppets, with spire-like crowns and royal sharp-pointed swords. Respecting these two Nats, Taw Sein Ko has some valuable remarks, thus :—"The apotheosis of the next Nats in the pantheon, *viz.*, the brothers Shwébyinnyínaung, follows on similar lines [to that of Mahágíri and his sister]. About the beginning of the 11th century A.D., Anawratházaw, King of Pagán, had in his service a Kalá [Indian] adventurer from the Talaing kingdom of Thatón. This man married a *balúmá* or ogress of Pópá, and two sons were born to him, who were respectively named Shwébyingí and Shwébyinngè. When these two brothers were grown up, they took service under the king ; and when the latter led an expedition to China, to secure the holy tooth of Gotama Buddha, which was enshrined there, they accompanied him. The Chinese emperor appears to have treated the Burmese king with some contempt, and to have refused to hold any communication with him. Thereupon the two brothers, who led a charmed life and could make themselves invisible, entered the king's palace at night, drew three lines with lime on his body and retired after writing on the walls

enjoining him to meet the Burmese king. In consequence of this mysterious writing, the two rulers met in a friendly way and entered into a compact of amity and friendship. In the meantime, however, the holy tooth had disappeared miraculously, and Anawratházaw returned home, suffering from the pangs of disappointment. On the return journey, Shwébyingyí and Shwébyinngè incurred the royal displeasure and were executed at Wayindók, a few miles to the north of Mandalay. At the same place, the king had built a pagoda called Sudaungbyé, and, after its consecration, resumed his journey by boat. On the way down the river Irrawaddy, the royal boat appeared to be held by the rudder and its progress was stopped. The king consulted his ministers about the mystery, and they informed him that the two brothers, Shwébyingyí and Shwébyinngè, who were executed by royal command, had become Nats, and that they resented that their valuable services should have been requited by death. It was only when King Anawratházaw had directed a Nat temple to be built near his pagoda at Wayindók, and ordered the people in the neighbourhood to make regular offerings to the Nats, that he was able to resume his journey and arrive at his capital in safety."

The sketch in *Mahágitá Médanígyàn* gives little more than appears in the chant translated below. In the case of these Nats the proceedings are more extended than usual. The Nat-inspired women first appear as males, in *pasós* or waist-cloths with an ornamental border, wide-sleeved jackets, white scarves thrown over the shoulder, and light red coloured helmets on their heads. In their right hand they have some young shoots of *eugenia*. They step forwards and backwards three times before the shrine and then retire to change their costume for embroidered velvet close-fitting jackets, light red native *pasós*, and hats for their heads, and then with a tray full of plantains in the left hand and a *dah* [sword] in the right, they come forward again and dance before beginning to sing the *Nat-than* of the elder Shwébyin Nat, which runs as follows :—

"With green velvet tunics embroidered in various colours, with light red loin cloths, red turbans, and sashes, we two brothers have adorned ourselves and come hither. We were the two pages in waiting who served Nawyetá [Anawrathá] the king, and went before him with naked swords in our hands. Our father was the *kalá*, the native Indian runner who was famed for his speed and gained the name of the Royal Runner. Five times he ran to Pópá Hill and five times he returned with posies of flowers before the king had combed his hair. It fell on a day when he was in Pópá Hill that our father met with a *balúmá*, an ogress. They loved one another and cherished their love on the hill. In the fullness of time she gave life to us two at a birth, and when we had grown to youths, the king attached us to his person and called us Shwébyin Naungdaw and Shwébyin Nyídaw. We went with him on his journey to China, and it was through our endeavours that he brought back the relics of the Buddha which he obtained from the Udíbwá. When he came back, he ordered a pagoda to be built at Taungbyón, and this was to be erected by all the persons of his court. Nawyetá, the king, went to view it and found two spaces, where there were wanting the bricks, which we brothers had not put in. Then the king was wroth and sent us to our death, and thus we became Nats and the pretty maidens have missed us from that day."

The younger Shwébyin Nat has a *Nat-than* of his own, as follows:—"I am the younger brother of Shwébyingyí, who is the chief Nat of Taungbyón. The true servant of Anawratházaw was I, and time and again I and my brother served him at the risk of our lives. But he slew us because he found not the two bricks, which was the share of work allotted to us whilst we were away. On our deaths we forthwith became Nats, but there was no place where we might stay. Therefore we clung to the royal barge and stayed it in its course. Then did the king grant to us the sovereignty over all the country that lies by Taungbyón. Our mother lives on Pópá Hill, but we two brothers live in Taungbyón. Now all ye pretty maidens, love ye us, as ye were wont to do while yet we were alive."

These legends have confused and incorrect reference to definite historical facts, which are unfortunately not so connected as the legends themselves. King Ngyaungúzaw Yahàn of Pagán (924-957) was a usurper and not of the regular line, but during a long reign of thirty-three years he introduced serpent (*nagá*) worship under Ari (Indian) priests all over Burma. He was at length deposed by King Kyaungbyú of the regular line (957-979), who in turn was deposed by King Kyízó, a son of Ngyaungúzaw Yahàn (979-985). Kyízó reintroduced the serpent worship and was succeeded by his brother Sókkadá (985-1010). Sókkadá, the serpent-worshipper, was deposed and slain by Anawratházaw, son of King Kyaungbyú, and so of the regular line (1010-1052). Anawratházaw was the great hero and conqueror and renowned restorer of the Buddhist faith to Burma.

Manuhá, King of Thatón, was conquered by Anawratházaw about 1030, and his whole family were turned into pagoda slaves at Pagán, and the untimely fate of one of these unfortunates, who died of leprosy, has led to his worship as a Nat.

Amongst many other adventures all round his kingdom, Anawratházaw marched to Yunnàn in search of the holy tooth-relic preserved in China, marrying a Shan princess of Maw during the expedition, a fact which has given rise to a popular Burmese play ; but he did not get his tooth-relic, and no doubt the legend of the Brahman minister, the Mandalé Bódaw, and his family, is connected with this journey.

It is, nevertheless, quite as likely that the story of the Mandalé Bódaw preserves the equally well-known and splendidly tragical tale of King Narathú or Kalákyá Min of Pagán (1160-1164). This bloodthirsty monarch began by killing his father, the venerable and revered Alaungsíthú, and during his short reign of four years he, amongst other crimes, killed his father's widow with his own hand. She was the daughter of the King of Pallí-kará (? Pála of Bengal) in India, and in revenge for her death that monarch sent eight soldiers, disguised as Brahmans, to the Burmese Court, who slew Narathú and then committed suicide. Hence Narathú's title of Kalákyá Min, *i.e.*, the king killed by foreigners.

Another story seems to be mixed up with this legend. King Yinzaw of Pagán had a son, Minthá Maung Shin, who was killed accidentally in a swing. This Min Yinzaw, whose name can also be read Yèzaw, is, I take it, the same personage as Ngyaungúzaw Yahàn, the serpent-worshipper, and thus Prince Maung Shin, the Nat, would be the brother of the royal Nats, Kyízó and Sókkadá or Súkadé.

To clear the relationship of this Group to each other, two Genealogies are necessary.

GENEALOGY I.

Thenzwin, 26th King of Pagán, 731-737.
(*See Group III., Gen. III.*)

- Ngyaungúzaw Yahàn, 37th K., usurper, 924-957.
- = No. 29. Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat.
- Kunzaw Kyaungbyú, 38th K. of Pagán, 957-979.
  - Anawratházaw, 41st K., 1010-1052. (*See Group III., Gens. II. and IV.*)
- A Brahman
  - Mandalé Bódaw —Nat, his minister.

Children:
- Kyízó, 39th K., 979-985, No. 30, Yómàshin Mingaung Nat.
- Sókkadá, 40th K., 985-1010, No. 28. Tibyúsaung Nat.
- No. 27. Minthá Maung Shin Nat.

Children:
- Relative of King Manuhà of Thatón, *ob. c.* 1030, No. 16. Nyaunggyin Nat.
- His ward, No. 25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat.
- His ward, No. 26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat.
  - No. 36. Shingwá Nat.

GENEALOGY II.

- King Pallíkará in India.
  - No. 24. Mandalé Bódaw Nat.
    - No. 25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Dat.
    - No. 26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat.
  - No. 36. Shingwá Nat, killed by K. Narathú.
- King Anawratházaw of Pagán, 1010-1052.
  - = K. Alaungsíthú of Pagán, 1085-1160.
    - K. Narathú of Pagán (Kalákyá Min), 1160-1164.

I may now proceed to describe the illustrations of Group II., or Anawratházaw Cycle, premising that the description will be according to the people's legends, and not according to the real history of the time.

No. 28. Tibyúsaung Nat, No. 29. Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat, and No. 30. Yómàshin Mingaung Nat, called also Bayinmàshin Mingaung Nat. Kyaungbyú Min had, among others, three sons: two by one queen, named Kyízó and Súkadé, and the great king Anawratházaw by another queen. Anawratházaw was much younger than the other two. Kyízó and Súkadé dethroned their father in 348 B.E. (986 A.D.) and Kyízó became king. He was a mighty hunter, pitching his camp at Nyundun on the Chindwin. When twenty-eight years of age he was accidentally killed at Pagyí, near Mt. Pópá, by an arrow from an huntsman and became the Yómàshin Mingaung Nat. And so, in 354 B.E. (992 A.D.), Súkadé became king and married his step-mother, who was the mother of Anawratházaw. As soon as he was old enough, Anawratházaw rebelled against Súkadé, who was killed by a lance. When Kyaungbyú Min was dethroned, his family were sent to a monastery, and the king himself was forced to turn monk. On his death Súkadé became the Tibyúsaung Nat. The mother of the above Nats became the Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat. Her votaries are women, who carry a rosary and wear a golden head-dress.

In this case, Tibyúsaung Nat is represented, both as a young and as an old man, in the costume of a *daukchá yathé*,[1] or what purports to be such, seated on a lotus throne. Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat is represented

[1] This is an unorthodox by-product of Burmese Buddhism. The *daukchá yathé*, or *rishi* wearing the *daukchá*, a head-gear containing an image of Buddha, is a harmless, ignorant, celibate ascetic, with some claim to occult powers, living in the jungles.

as a girl kneeling in full Court dress on a lotus or on a lotus throne. The outward turned elbow is an accomplishment of which Burmese young ladies are very proud. Bayinmáshin Mingaung Nat is seated on a lotus throne in full Court dress of a high class, and sometimes with a bow unstrung.



No. 28. Tibyúsaung Nat.



No. 29. Tibyúsaung Mèdaw Nat.



No. 30. Bayinmáshin Mingaung Nat.



No. 27. Minthá Maung Shin Nat.

No. 27. Minthá Maung Shin Nat. Maung Shin was the son of Min Yinzaw of Pagán and settled in Kyauk-thànbauk and Pabetmyó. He died from an accidental fall from a swing while at play. This Nat is represented in Court dress, seated on a lotus throne and playing the Burmese harp.

No. 24. Mandalé Bódaw Nat, called also Kyet Yók Nat, No. 25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat (the elder Shwébyin Nat), No. 26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat (the younger Shwébyin Nat). The two Shwébyin were brothers and the sons of a native of India (in the service of King Anawratházaw) by an ogress he met with on Mt. Pópá, whither he had been sent to get certain flowers for the king. They also served under the king and were sent by him to China for the holy tooth-relic from the royal palace there. They returned with the relic and the king erected a pagoda for it, requiring a brick from each of his officers. The two Shwébyin failed to supply a brick each, were killed by being castrated and became Nats. Mandalé Bódaw was the title of a minister of Anawratházaw, who was a Brahman and the guardian of the two Shwébyin. He was killed together with them. He tried to get away on a marble elephant, which he could vivify by placing an enchanted white thread round it, but failed and was captured and killed. All three became Nats.

In this case the Mandalé Bodaw Nat is represented standing on a lotus throne in the full official Court dress of a minister of the king. He bears a sword, and his right hand is in the conventional attitude of preaching. This appears to refer to his dual character as a warrior and a priest. The two Shwébyin brothers are in the Court dress of officials, seated on lotus thrones, and bearing swords in the right hand or in the right and left hands respectively.



No. 24. Mandalé Bódaw Nat.



No. 25. Shwébyin Naungdaw Nat.



No. 26. Shwébyin Nyídaw Nat.

No. 36. Shingwá Nat. She was the sister of the Mandalé Bódaw and was killed at the same time, becoming a Nat. This Nat is represented as a young girl in Court dress, standing on a lotus throne or on a lotus on a throne.



No. 36. Shingwá Nat.



No. 16. Nyaung-gyin Nat.

No. 16. Nyaung-gyin Nat, called also Nyaung-gyin O Nat. He was a member of Manuhà's family and died of leprosy in the days of Anawratházaw. This Nat is represented as a leper in high-class Court dress leaning on a staff. He has lost the ends of both fingers and toes, and his face is marked with the usual signs of tubercular leprosy.

Varieties of the Thirty-seven Nats.

1. Shwé Kyetyón Maung and Hnamá (Mandalé Bódaw and his sister, Nos. 24 and 36).
2. Shin-ngaing-gwá (Mandalé Bódaw's sister, No. 36, as an Indian woman). 3. Pyindaung Kadaw (Pyindaung's wife, No. 34, Anauk Mibayá).
4. Kazwè Kadaw (Kazwè's wife, No. 33, Myaukpet Shinmá).





Variants of the Thirty-seven Nats.

1. Kó Thén Shin, for No. 4, really the Supreme Judge of the Chins. 2. Thadó Minzaw, for No. 15, the celebrated legendary King of Tagaung. 3. Dán Maung Shin, for No. 32, the Tree Nat. 4. Varuná Nat Min, for No. 37, the River Nat, taken direct from Brahmanism.

CHAPTER XII.

THE AVA MINGAUNG AND PAGAN ALAUNGSITHU MIXED CYCLE.



GROUP III., or Ava Mingaung and Pagán Alaungsíthú Mixed Cycle, consists of Nats Nos. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 31, 32, 34, 35, that is of eleven Nats, whose story is supposed to centre round the two kings named Mingaung (a common royal title), who flourished at Ava respectively at the very commencement and the extreme end of the 15th century. But there is some confusion in the legends, caused by the attribution of the Northern Queen (Anauk Míbayá, a regular title of one of the chief queens of every Burmese ruler), who is a principal heroine of the story, to three husbands dwelling centuries apart. And so parts of the legend can be equally well referred to the days of King Thénzwin of Pagán in the 8th century, ancestor of those early Pagán kings about whom much of the legend of Group II. centres, and also to the days of the venerated Alaungsíthú of the same dynasty, who flourished in the 11th-12th centuries, to whom likewise part of the Group II. legend can be referred. In fact, in one view, the stories of Groups II. and III. can be looked upon as belonging to the same cycle of legends. Lastly, by what may be considered a natural confusion in the popular mind, the legend of Group III. has been mixed up with the history of the Shan dynasty of Pinyá of the 15th century. On the whole, the knots in the thread of this group of legends demand a good deal of patience in unravelling, and this explains my title for the group: the Ava Mingaung and Pagán Alaungsíthú Mixed Cycle. The outline of this group of legends is as follows:—King Sinbyúshin Mintarágyí of Ava died of fever and was succeeded by his younger brother, King Mingaung-gyí, who in turn was succeeded by his son, King Thíháthú Sinbyúshin. He was murdered at the Aungbinlè Lake by the Kóngbaung Sawbwá, to be succeeded by his son, who died of fever. Thíháthú Sinbyúshin had a concubine, who died very suddenly at Ava. The second (Dútiyá) Mingaung's son was King Shwé Nàngyaw, under whom his nephew, Shwé Nawrathá, was murdered by drowning for supposed rebellion.

Mingaung-gyí, by his Northern Queen, the Anauk Míbayá, had two sons, Síthú and Kyawzwá, who quarrelled and killed each other, and this caused the death of their mother. This Northern Queen is also said to have been the wife of King Alaungsíthú of Pagán, and so Síthú and Kyawzwá would thus be *his* sons. Alaungsíthú's grandsons both came to the throne in due course, and the younger, Narabadísíthú, murdered the elder, Narathéngá, with the help of an officer, one Nga Aungzwá, who was promised Narathéngá's widow as a bride in reward, but was murdered instead.

This same Northern Queen is further stated to have been the wife of King Thénzwin of Pagán and stepmother of King Shwélaung, which throws back the story of Síthú and Kyawzwá many centuries. King Shwélaung's grandson, King Sawmun-hnit, had a son called the Hlaingdet Myózá, who was cruelly put to death for negligence during a campaign against the Shans, and this caused the death of his mother from grief.

Of the above-mentioned personages, the following became Nats:—King Sinbyúshin Mintarágyí the father, and King Thíháthú Sinbyúshin the son, respectively of King Mingaung-gyí, his grandson Kyawzwá, Thíháthú's concubine, and King Dútiyá Mingaung's great-nephew Shwé Nawrathá. Also the Anauk Míbayá and her two sons, Síthú and Kyawzwá, and the ill-treated officer Nga Aungzwá; and lastly, the Hlaingdet Myózá and his mother.

The Nats who take origin in this group of stories are the following:—No. 7, Mintará Nat, who is King Sinbyúshin Mintarágyí of Ava. No. 12, Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat, who is King Thíháthú Sinbyúshin of Ava. No. 11, Ngázíshin Nat, who is Ngázíshin Kyawzwá of Pinyá, confounded with Min Hlàngè of Ava. No. 35, Shingón Nat, is the concubine of King Thíháthú Sinbyúshin. No. 9, Shwé Nawrathá Nat, is the nephew of King Shwé Nàngyaw of Ava. No. 34, Anauk Míbayá Nat, who is the Northern Queen of King Mingaung-gyí of Ava (1480-1501), or of King Alaungsíthú of Pagán (1085-1160), or of King Thénzwin of Pagán (731-737). Nos. 31 and 32, Min Síthú Nat and Min Kyawzwá Nat, are her two sons. No. 10, Aungzwámàgyí Nat, who is Nga Aungzwá, promised the widow of King Narathéngá of Pagán in marriage. No. 19, Shwé Sippin Nat, who is the son of King Sawkin-hnit of Pagán. No. 20, Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat, is his mother.

The historical references made in this group of legends are even more confused than those of the second group. To commence with the allusions to the Ava Dynasty of the 15th century:—Sinbyúshin Tarábyá (Mintarágyí is a mere general royal title), the third king of that dynasty, reigned for seven months between 1400-1401, when he was murdered, and was succeeded by his brother, Mingaung or Mingaung-gyí, who had a chequered career for twenty-one years and died in 1422. His son, Thíháthú Sinbyúshin, became for a short time the husband of the famous Peguan Queen Shin Sawbú, but was deposed by the Shan Chief (Sawbwá) of Unbaunglè and died in exile in 1426. His infant son Min Hlàngè (Little Prince Beauty) was placed on the throne, but was murdered within three months.

Later in the same dynasty came the second (Dútiyá) Mingaung (1480-1501) and his son Shwénànshin (1501-1526). With them is associated the legend of the Nat Shwé Nawrathá, who is said to have been put to death by drowning for rebellion. I think it, however, far more likely that the two Mingaungs have been mixed up, for the former had a son named Kámarú, who, under the title of Nawrathá, was governor of Arakan for his father. He was taken prisoner by the great king, Yázadarít of Pegu, and barbarously murdered at Bassein about 1406.

That part of the legend which connects the Síthú and Kyawzwá Nats with the first Mingaung is interesting, because the mightiest general that served under that somewhat feeble king was his son Minyè Kyawzwá, who was finally killed in battle in 1416 during his father's life, and was just the kind of personage to have become a Nat in the popular imagination.

The legend, however, that makes out the Síthú and Kyawzwá Nats to be the sons of King Alaungsíthú of Pagán (1085-1160) carries us to the group already mentioned, which has arisen around one of the greatest heroes of Burmese history, King Anawratházaw of Pagán (1010-1052), whose great-grandson Alaungsíthú was. Alaungsíthú's second son, Narathú, better known as Kalákyá Min (1160-1164), murdered him in extreme old age, and among other subsequent crimes he is said to have slain his father's widow with his own hands, for which deed he was himself murdered. All this would be good cause for her becoming a Nat. Kalákyá Min had two sons: one, Narathéngá (1164-1167) killed by the other, Narabadísíthú, a great monarch, who reigned thirty-seven years (1167-1204), was a prominent Buddhist reformer, and built the great Gawdàpalin and Súlamani Pagodas at Pagán, which made him famous. The great dynasty finally came to a politically feeble end in the learned and pious Kyawzwá, the last King of Pagán (1279-1291), who was killed by the famous three Shan brothers on their founding the Shan dynasties of Pinyá and Sagaing.

One version of the legends connects the Nats Síthú and Kyawzwá and their mother with King Shwélaung of Pagán, of whom and his father, Thénzwin, I at present know nothing, except that the *Chronicles* say that they

reigned at Pagán—Thénzwin 731-737, and Shwélaung 737-746, about one hundred years after Thénga-Yázà, the supposed founder of the present Burmese era, and some three hundred years before the great hero of the dynasty Anawratházaw. One of Shwélaung's grandsons and his great-grandson both became King of Pagán in succession, as King Munlut (778-795) and King Sawkin-hnit (795-822). They are both mixed up in the legends as King Sawmun-hnit, who put to death that unfortunate Nat, the Hlaingdet Myózá.

The whole of this difficult set of stories is further complicated by confusing Thíháthú Sinbyúshin (1422-1426) of Ava with Thíháthú Tazíshin of Pinlè (1298-1322), the younger and most powerful of the three Shan brothers who founded the dynasty of Myinzaing and Pinyá as successors to that of Pagán in 1298. He married the widow of Kyawzwá, the last king of Pagán (1279-1298), whom he had deposed, and nominated her son Uzaná (1322-1342) as his successor. Uzaná was, however, deposed by Ngázíshin Kyawzwá, his half-brother, *i.e.*, the son of the widow of Kyawzwá of Pagán and Thíháthú Tazíshin. This is the personage "Kyawzwá, King of Pinlè" who is called Ngázíshin Nat. He reigned 1342-1350 and was succeeded by another Kyawzwá, his son (1350-1359). No doubt, the confusion and difficulties connected with this story are due to the unfortunate frequency of the name or title Kyawzwá in Burmese history.

No less than four Genealogies are necessary to make clear the inter-relationship of the Nats mentioned in this Group.

GENEALOGY I.

King Sinbyúshin Tarábyá of Ava, 1400-1401, No. 7, Mintará Nat.

King Mingaung, or Mingaung-gyí of Ava, 1401-1422 = No. 34, Anauk Míbayá Nat.

No. 31. Min Síthú Nat.

Minyè Kyawzwá, *ob.* 1416, No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.

[A daughter married to Kámarú Nawrathá, Governor of Arakan, No. 9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat, murdered about 1406.]

No. 35. Shingón Nat = King Thíháthú Sinbyúshin of Ava, 1422-6, No. 12. Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat.

King Min Hlángè of Ava, 1426, No. 11. Ngázíshin Nat.

King Min Nansí, Usurper of same family, 1426-1439.

King Dútiyá Mingaung of Ava, 1480-1501.

King Shwé Nàngyaw of Ava, 1501-1526.

Minbyaing Màthíríthú.

No. 9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat.

GENEALOGY II.

King Anawratházaw of Pagán, 1010-1052.

King Alaungsíthú of Pagán, 1085-1160 = No. 34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.

No. 31. Min Síthú Nat, who was intended to be King Narathú of Pagán (Kalákyá Min), 1160-1164, or his son, King Narabadísíthú of Pagán, 1167-1204.

No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat, who was intended to be the last king of Pagán, Kyawzwá, 1279-98.

King Narathéngá of Pagán, 1164-1167 = a Queen = No. 10. Aungzwá-màgyí Nat, 2nd husb.

Shan line of Myinzaing and Pinyá, 1298-1364.

Shan line of Sagaing, 1315-1352.

King Thadóminbyá of Ava, 1364-1367.

King Sinbyúshin Tarábyá of Ava, 1400-1401.

(*See Gen. I.*)

GENEALOGY III.[1]

Thénga, 25th K. of Pagán, 723-731.

- A younger brother of Thénzwin.
  - Anawratházaw of Pagán, 1010-1052. (*See Gen. II.*)
- A Queen = Thénzwin, 26th K., 731-737. = also No. 34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.
  - Shwé Laung, 27th K., 737-746.
    - Tundwin, 28th K., 746-755.
      - Munlut, 29th K., 755-778.
      - Sawkin-hnit, 30th K., 778-795. = No. 20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat.
        - Kèlú, 31st K., 795-822
        - No. 19. Hlaingdet Myózá.
  - No. 31. Min Síthú Nat.
  - No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.

GENEALOGY IV.

Anawratházaw of Pagán, 1010-1052.

- A Shan wife = Kyawzwá, last K. of Pagán, 1279-1298.
  - Athingaya Sawyun of Sagaing, 1315-1322.
  - Thadóminbyá of Ava, successor to both lines, 1364-1367. (*See Gen. II.*)
- also d. of King Tayókpyé = Min of Pagán, 1248-1279.
  - Ngázíshin Kyawzwá of Pinyá, 1342-1350, No. 11. Ngázíshin Nat.
- 2nd husb., Thíháthú of Myinzaing and Pinyá, 1298-1322.
  - Uzaná of Myinzaing and Pinyá, 1322-1342, adopted by Thíháthú Tazíshin.

I will now proceed to describe the illustrations of Group III., or Ava Mingaung and Pagán Alaungsíthú Mixed Cycle, according to the popular ideas.

No. 7. Mintará Nat, called also Mintarágyí Nat. He was the son of Sinbyúshin Mintarágyí, and the elder



No. 12. Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat.



No. 7. Mintará Nat.



No. 11. Ngázíshin Nat.

[1] See Gen. I., Chap. XI.

brother of Mingaung-gyí of Ava. He died of fever and became a Nat. He is represented seated on a lotus throne, with a fan, in full high class Court costume, winged in the Yódayá, *i.e.*, Siamese, fashion.

No. 12. Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat. Thíháthú, King of Amarapúra, was the son of King Mingaung. He was killed in some rice land near the Aungbinlè Lake by the Kóngbaung Sawbwá and became a Nat. This Nat is represented standing or sitting on a lotus, or on a throne, in Court dress, with a swish or fan in the left hand; supported on a one-headed or three-headed elephant, in token of his royalty, no doubt. He is sometimes accompanied by a driver or *mahaut* in front, and a *balú* armed, or simply an attendant, behind.

No. 11. Ngázíshin Nat, Lord of the Five (White) Elephants, called also Ngágyaung Tagá Nat. Kyawzwá, King of Pinlè, was the son of King Thíháthú and procured five white elephants from over the sea. He died of fever and became a Nat. This Nat is represented as a royal figure in Court dress seated on a lotus, with a sword in the right hand, four umbrellas over him, and royal spittoon and betel box before him. He is supported by a five-headed elephant, which has four pots for offerings between the heads. All these accumulated insignia of royalty refer to the claim of this king in life to a descent from all the royal lines existing in his time. He is, however, sometimes represented merely as a royal soldier youth seated on a five-headed elephant, with a sword in the left hand.



No. 35. Shingón Nat.



No. 9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat.



No. 34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.

No. 35. Shingón Nat. She was a concubine of Sinbyúshin Thíháthú, who died suddenly at Ava, on returning from a trip to the Aungbinlè Lake, and became a Nat. She is represented as a young girl standing on a lotus throne or on a lotus on a throne, in the Court costume of a royal attendant, and in the attitude of obeisance.

No. 9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat. He was the son of Minbyaing Màthíríthú and grandson of the second Mingaung of Ava. During the reign of his uncle, Shwé Nàngyaw, one of his servants, Nga Thaukkyá, rebelled. On this account, Shwé Nawrathá was thrown into the Irrawaddy and became a Nat. This Nat is represented in high class Court dress, seated on a lotus throne, as a Manipúrí, with polo mallet and ball. The modern English game of polo came from the Manipúrís through English officers in quite recent times.

No. 34. Anauk Míbayá Nat, the Northern Queen. She was the mother of the Nats, Min Síthú and Min Kyawzwá. She was frightened to death on meeting Min Kyawzwá, after he had become a Nat, on a pony, while amusing herself in a cotton field near Ava. Another legend says she was the wife of Mingaung-gyí, son of Mingyízwa. This Nat is represented as a young woman in Court costume, sitting or kneeling on a lotus throne, and suckling an infant.

No. 31. Min Síthú Nat, and No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat. King Thénzwin of Pagán had two sons by his Northern Queen, the Anauk Míbayá, named Síthú and Kyawzwá. He determined to make another son, Shwé Laung, his heir, and in order to avert danger from him in consequence, he sent the brothers, Síthú and Kyawzwá, to suppress the Karens on the Taung-ngú [Tonghoo] border, which service they performed with great success. Subsequently, they made a great dyke to drain the Myaungdú village, founded by Min Nyénaung, and quarrelled over turning water into it; whereupon Síthú killed his younger brother, Kyawzwá, who became a Nat, and revenged himself by afterwards doing Síthú to death by enchantments. Síthú in his turn became a Nat, too. There is another legend, which makes out Min Síthú Nat to be Alaungsíthú, son of King Shwégú-dáraká of Pagán. The Nat Min Síthú is represented as a young man in high class Court dress, seated on a lotus throne



No. 31. Min Síthú Nat.



No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.

in the attitude of preaching; and the Nat Min Kyawzwá as a young man in high class Court dress, riding violently.

The *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, Part I., Vol. II., p. 24f., has a story of these brothers, who are popular Nats:— "An old king of Pagán had two sons, called Síthú and Kyawzwá, by his Northern Queen, and a son named Shwé Laung Min by the Queen of the south palace. He wanted Shwé Laung Min to succeed him, and, to save that prince from the jealousies and plots of his half-brothers, he sent these two to live at Taungnyó-lémà, and later, when he heard that they had made themselves very powerful, he ordered them further off to Taung-ngú [Tonghoo]. From Taung-ngú the two brothers went and attacked the Karens and, when they came back from their expedition, they built a city called Kúkhàn. They dug a number of canals round about it, so that the city came subsequently to be known as Myaungtú-pauk and remains to the present day as Myaungtú-ywá. But there was not enough water in the canals round about it, so the elder brother Síthú murdered Kyawzwá, and Kyawzwá became a Nat. As a Nat, he set on his brother and strangled him, and Síthhú became a Nat, too. A large building was set up for a dwelling-place for Min Kyawzwá and it may be seen still. In the month of Nayón (June) every year a feast is held in his honour with fireworks and cock-fights."

The *Mahágítà Médanígyàn*, from which the above story is taken, says that the history of Min Kyawzwá is quite differently related in another chronicle. "In former times, the king of Pagán had four ministers, who were brothers. He gave in marriage to Kyawzwá, the youngest of the four, a girl named Má Bómè, who sold spirits in Pópá Village. They lived happily together for a time, but Kyawzwá became addicted to his wife's liquor and spent all his sober moments in cock-fighting and letting off fireworks. He died and became a Nat in Kúkhàn-gyímyó." The religious are left to choose which version they please. The main point is the drink, the cock-fighting, and the fireworks.

In the shed erected for the festival of this Nat, the *natkadaws* come forward all dressed alike in a red *pasó*, the end of which is thrown over the shoulder, and a red turban. They imitate the letting off of fireworks and the proceedings at a cock-fight, and they slap their left biceps with the right hand (as a Burman does when he is challenging to a wrestling or boxing bout) several times, and then they dance and set up the *Nat-than*:—

"Here am I come. I, Maung Kyawzwá, the dearly loved husband of Má Bómè, of Pópá Village, clad in a spangled red garment. I, who drank deep of strong drink, and loved fireworks and cock-fights. I was the youngest of the four brothers, who long and faithfully served Alaungsíthú, the monarch of Pagán. Daily I went from place to place to gratify my foibles with my fighting cock hidden in my arms and my money in my waist-belt concealed from Má Bómè, the wife of my bosom. Many a main did we fight under the shade of that pipul tree, and many a time did I reel along the streets, drunk with Má Bómè's liquors, and many is the time that the pretty little maids picked me up out of the gutter." Then the corybantic music strikes up and the dancers weave their paces.

No. 10. Aungzwámagyí Nat. One Nga Saung-gyàn raised a rebellion at Ngasingú, about six miles to the north of Mandalay, against Min Narathéngá, king of Pagán, and the king sent his younger brother, Narabadísíthú, against him, in the hope that his brother might be killed, so that he might marry his widow, *i.e.*, his sister-in-law, the Wálúwadí Princess. So Narabadísíthú left his servant, Nga Aungzwá, behind, with a promise that if he could kill the king, he should be married to the widow. The king was duly despatched, and Nga Aungzwá



No. 10. Aungzwámagyí Nat.

demanded fulfilment of his promise, but the lady flatly refused to marry him, as he was not of the blood royal. When Nga Aungzwá was told of this, he spat on the floor, and used some strong language about the fulfilment of promises. The new king, being enraged at this, had him put to death, whereon he became a Nat. This Nat, who is very popular, is represented as a young man in high class Court costume, with a sword in the right hand, riding quietly.



No. 19. Shwé Sippin Nat.



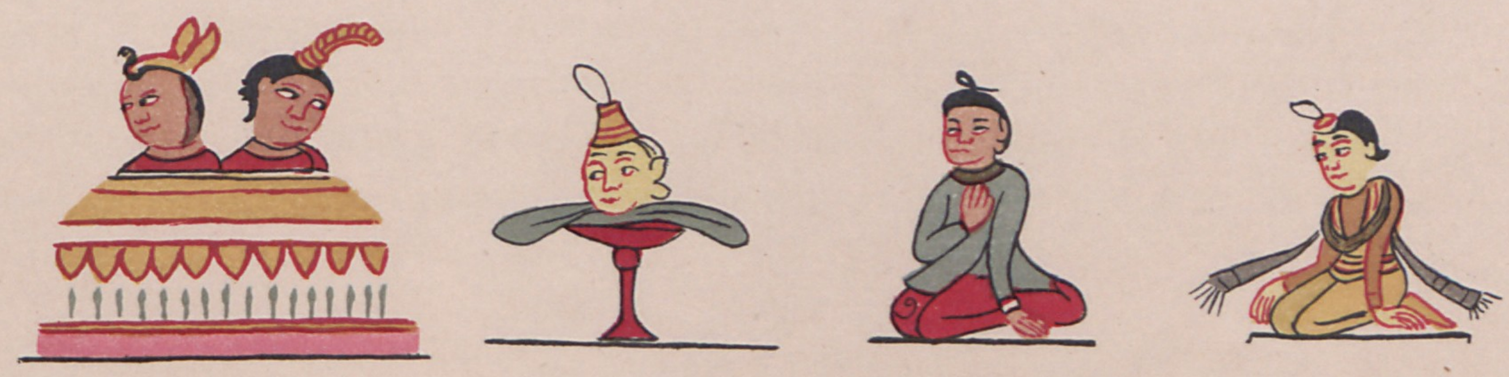
No. 20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat.

No. 19. Shwé Sippin Nat, also called Shwé Sit-thí Nat. His title was the Hlaingdet Myózá and he was the son of Sawmun-hnit, king of Pagán. He was sent to suppress the insurrection of Kyaing-thin, son of the Pagán Sawbwá, but spent the time in cock-fighting, and so was put to death by having his legs buried in the earth and being left to die. He became a Nat. This Nat is represented seated on a lotus throne in high class Court dress, with sword uplifted or over his shoulder in his right hand.

No. 20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat. She was the mother of the Hlaingdet Myózá, who became the Shwé Sippin Nat, and died of grief at the terrible end of her son. She became a Nat also. This Nat is represented as a girl in full Court dress, with and without the *nagá* head-dress, kneeling on a lotus throne, or on a lotus, with her elbow in the fashionable state of dislocation.

Varieties of the Thirty-seven Nats.

1. Shwé Pagyók (Mahágíri, No. 2, and his sister Hnamádawgyi, No. 3). 2. Shwémyet-hná (Hnamádawgyí, No. 3).
3. Shwé Nabé (Mahágíri's wife, No. 4). 4. Nèmí (Duttabaung's neglected daughter, No. 37).





Indian Gods as Nats.
1. Gawyamándá Nat (Vishnú). 2. Sandí Nat-thamí (Dévi). 3. Maháwénné Nat (Ganésa).

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TABIN SHWEDI AND BAYIN NAUNG CYCLES.



GROUP IV., or Tabin Shwédí Cycle, consists of Nats Nos. 6, 8, 17 and 33, or only four Nats, purporting to be connected with the surroundings of the conqueror, King Tabin Shwédí of Tonghoo (Taung-ngú), who was the founder of the great Burman dynasty of Pegu in the 16th century. Hence my name for the group. The outline of this legend is as follows:—Tabin Shwédí, who was the son of King Min Kínyó of Tonghoo, became by his conquests King of Tonghoo and Hanthawadí (Pegu), and was murdered by his Minister, Thamin Sawdók. The wife of Minyè Théngáthú, the keeper of the royal umbrella, died in childbirth and her child, on the death of King Tabin Shwédí, became King Mingaung of Tonghoo, under the popular title of Kuthén Thaken. King Mingaung had a secretary who died of snake-bite. Of the above personages, King Tabin Shwédí himself, King Mingaung, his mother and secretary all became Nats.

The Nats who take origin in this legend are:—No. 17, Tabin Shwédí Nat, who is the great King Tabin Shwédí himself. No. 6, Taung-ngú Mingaung Nat, called also Taung-ngú Shinbayin Nat, who is King Mingaung of Prome. No. 33, Myaukpet Shinmà Nat, who is King Mingaung's mother. No. 8, Thàndawgàn Nat, who is his secretary, as the name implies.

Historically, the legend tells a confused story. One of the results of the break up of the Pagán dynasty in 1298 was the establishment, about 1313, by nobles of Burmese descent, of a small, and at first subordinate, kingdom at Tonghoo, which, in the following century, played a great part in Burmese story. In 1485, Min Kínyó of this Tonghoo dynasty established himself as a ruler of some consequence, and claimed, both through his father, Maháthéngkayá, and his mother, descent from Kyawzwá, the last king of Pagán (1279-1298). Min Kínyó died in 1530, leaving a son, Tabin Shwédí, who became the celebrated conqueror of Pegu in 1540, a titular king of Tonghoo being set up as one of his vassals. Tabin Shwédí was murdered in 1550 by Thamin Sawdók, a representative of the royal race of Pegu, who succeeded him for three months only. In 1541, Tabin Shwédí attacked and took Prome, putting the subordinate king thereof, Mingaung, and his family to a cruel death. This King Mingaung of Prome seems to be the original of King Mingaung of Tonghoo mentioned in the legend. The following Genealogy will show the relations of the personages mentioned in the legends:—

GENEALOGY.[1]

Kyawzwá, last K. of Pagán, 1279-1298.

Thíháthú Tazíshin, first Shan king of Pinyá, 1298-1312.

No. 33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat. = Mahátheng kayá of Tonghoo. = also sister of Min Síthúngè of Tonghoo, 1481-1485.

Min Kínyó of Tonghoo, 1485-1530.

No. 17. Tabin Shwédí of Tonghoo and Pegu. 1530-1550.

No. 6. Mingaung of Tonghoo, 1538-1541. ——— No. 8, his Secretary, Yébyá, Thàndawgàn Nat.

Thadóminzaw of Prome, *ob.* 1525, uncle of Dútiyá Mingaung of Ava, 1480-1501.

No. 33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat. = Bayindwé of Prome, *c.* 1525-1533.

Narabadí of Prome, *c.* 1533-1538. No. 6. Mingaung of Prome, *c.* 1538-1541.

I will now describe the illustrations of Group IV., or the Tabin Shwédí Cycle, according to popular ideas:— No. 17. Tabin Shwédí Nat. He was king of Tonghoo and Hanthawadí (Pegu) and son of Mín Kínyó. His Minister, Thamin Sawdók, warned him of ill-fortune and advised him to remove his residence. This he did, but, nevertheless, he was killed by his royal sword-bearer (*kalut-le'wèdá-hmú*), who was the younger brother of Thamin Sawdók, and became a Nat. This Nat is represented as seated on a lotus throne, in Court dress, with and without wings, with a sword in his right hand.



No. 17. Tabin Shwédí Nat.



No. 6. Taung-ngú Mingaung Nat.

No. 6. Taung-ngú Mingaung Nat, also called Taung-ngú Shinbayin Nat. He was king of Taung-ngú (Tonghoo), and was known as Kuthén Thaken (Lord of Bassein), son of Minyè Thénggáthú by a mother who was a native of Kadú in the Shwébó district. He was seized with dysentery and went to the Paung-laung (Sittang) river to get his health restored, but died on his return from the unlucky smell of onions. This Nat is represented as seated on a lotus throne, in high class Court dress, with a fan in his right hand.

No. 33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat. She was the wife of Minyè Thénggáthú, the keeper of the king's golden umbrella. She died in childbirth near Sagaing, on her way to visit her parents, and her child, a boy, was taken

[1] See Gen. IV., Chap. XII.



No. 33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat.



No. 8. Thàndawgàn Nat.

to his father at Tonghoo, and became King Mingaung on the death of King Tabin Shwédí. On his own death he, too, became a Nat. This Nat is represented as a young girl, but also as an old woman, kneeling in Court dress on a lotus throne, or on a lotus on a throne.

No. 8. Thàndawgàn Nat, called also Yébyá Nat. He was an assistant secretary to Mingaung, King of Tonghoo, and died from snakebite while plucking jasmine flowers for the king. This Nat is represented in the Court dress of an ordinary official with a fan, seated on a lotus throne.

Group V., or Bayin Naung Cycle, consists of Nats Nos. 15, 18, 22 and 23, or only of four Nats, whose direct reference is not clear, but they are, I think, of a very late date and are connected with the great conqueror Bayin Naung of Pegu and his dynasty in the 17th century. Hence my designation of the group. The outline of this set of stories is as follows :—A son of the king of Ava died whilst in a monastery. A son of Anaukthalón Mintarágyí of Ava died of drink. A son of Min Bayin of Ava died from an overdose of opium. Yun Bayin, Chief of Zimmè, a Siamese Shan State, was conquered by Sinbyúmyáshin of Pegu and died at Rangoon in captivity in 1558. All these personages became Nats, under the titles respectively of Shindaw Nat, Minyè Aungdin Nat, Maung Minbyú Nat, Yun Bayin Nat.

The Nats arising out of these legends are :—No. 15. Shindaw Nat, who is the son of King Nyaung-yán Min of Ava. No. 18. Minyè Aungdin Nat, who is the son of King Anaukpyetlón Mintará of Ava. No. 23. Maung Minbyú Nat, who is a son of King Bayin Naung of Pegu and Ava. No. 22. Yun Bayin Nat, who is a Yun Shan chief of Zimmè.

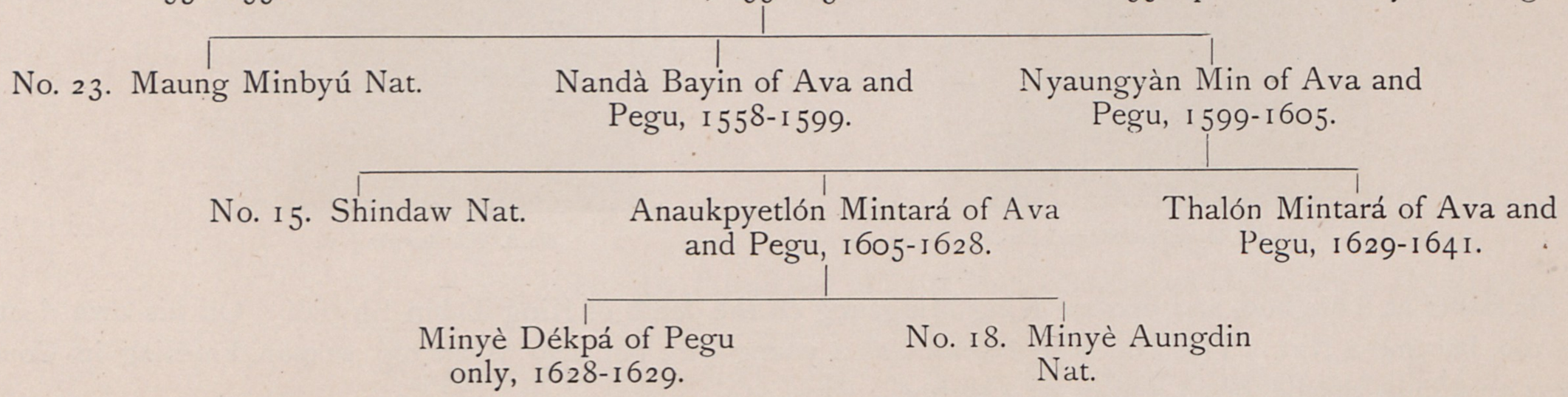
For the historical facts of this legend, or set of legends, there is very little to go upon, but still, I think, we are now amongst tales of later date than any of the other legends, as they are connected with the descendants of Bayin Naung, the great Peguan monarch of Burmese descent and the real successor of Tabin Shwédí. He was the king known to the Portuguese as Branginoco, through the Talaing pronunciation of his full title, Bayingyí Naungzaw, and reigned from 1551 to 1581. He held all Burma, *i.e.*, both the Ava and Pegu kingdoms, from 1555, as Emperor, with subordinate kings at Ava, Prome and Tonghoo. Bayin Naung's successor was Nandà Bayin (1581-1599), who came to an untimely end, and was succeeded by a brother, Nyaungyàn Min, the tributary king of Ava, who made himself king of the whole of his father's territory, being followed in this by his son, Anaukpyetlón Mintará (1605-1628). On his death, his son, Minyè Dékpá, made an unsuccessful attempt on the throne, but was nevertheless *de jure* king for about a year (1628-1629), the regular successor being his uncle, Thalón Mintará (1629-1648).

The history of the time is one of continuous murder and cruelty of every kind, and, so far as the evidence can guide us, I think we must look on these Nats as belonging to this period. It is indeed pretty clear that Minyè Aungdin Nat was a son of Anaukpyetlón Mintará, and Maung Minbyú Nat a son of Bayin Naung himself : and as regards Shindaw Nat, I am inclined to put him down as a son of Nyaungyàn Min. In all this uncertainty there is one clear bit of history. The legend says that Sinbyúmyáshin (Lord of Many White Elephants) of Pegu took as a prisoner the Chief of Zimmè, who died at Rangoon in 1558, and that his name was Yun Bayin, *i.e.*, King of the Yuns. As a matter of historical fact, in 1547, or thereabouts, Bayin Naung made

his famous inroad into Siam in search of white elephants, taking the king and royal family of Siam into captivity, and especially punishing the Shan State of Zimmè, which fought him better than any of his other enemies, his chief opponents being the Yun Shans.

The following Genealogy will show the relationship of this Group to each other, so far as I understand it.

GENEALOGY.[1]



I will now describe the illustrations of Group V., or Bayin Naung Cycle, in the language of the people, which, of course, is not at all that of history.



No. 15. Shindaw Nat.



No. 18. Minyè Aungdin Nat.

No. 15. Shindaw Nat. He was a young prince placed by the king of Ava under the abbot of the Hnat-pyittaung Payá to be educated at his monastery. While still a novice, he died of snakebite. This Nat is represented as a novice, with rosary and fan, telling his beads.

No. 18. Minyè Aungdin Nat, called also Minyè Aung Nat. He was the son of Anauk Thalón Mintarágyí, and died of drink. This Nat is represented as a young man seated on a lotus on a throne, or on a lotus throne, in high class Court dress, playing on the Burmese harp.

No. 23. Maung Minbyú Nat. He was a prince of Ava and married the daughter of a cavalry officer. He died of an overdose of opium. This Nat is represented as a young man seated on a lotus throne, or on a lotus on a throne, in high class Court dress, playing on a horn or pipe.

No. 22. Yun Bayin Nat. He was the Chief of Zimmè and was made a prisoner of war by Sinbyúmyáshin of Hantháwadí (Pegu). He died at Rangoon of dysentery in 920 B.E. (1558 A.D.), and became a Nat. This Nat is represented seated on a throne, or on a lotus throne, in high class Court dress, with a sheathed sword.

[1] See Chap. XII.



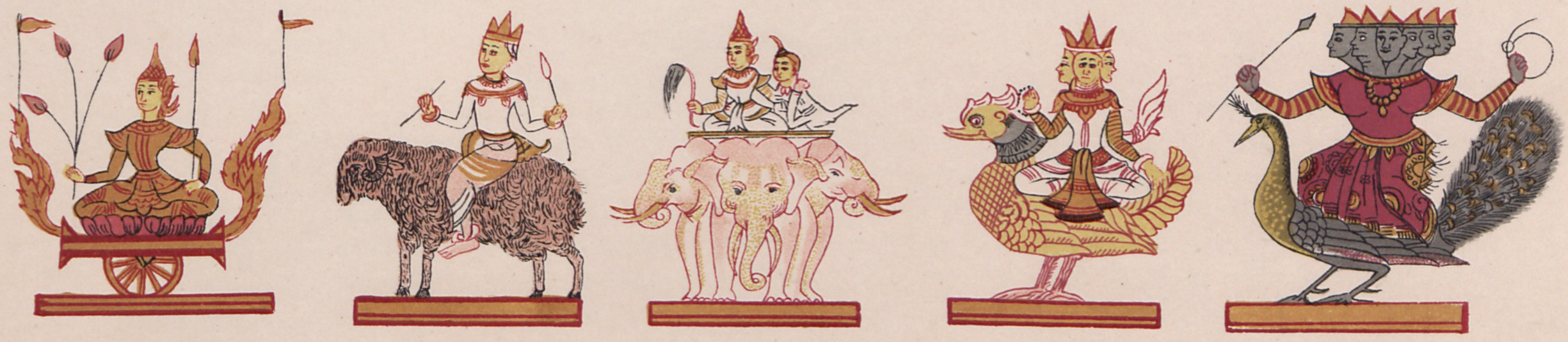
No. 23. Maung Minbyú Nat.



No. 22. Yun Bayin Nat.

Indian Gods as Nats.

1. Né Nat (Súriya, the Sun). 2. Mí Nat (Agni, the God of Fire), 3. Thagyá Nat (Sakra, Indra, the God of the Firmament, and his wife, Indráni). 4. Byammá Nat (Brahmá as Chaturmukha, the Four-faced). 5. Thakándá Nat (Skanda, Kumára, the God of War).

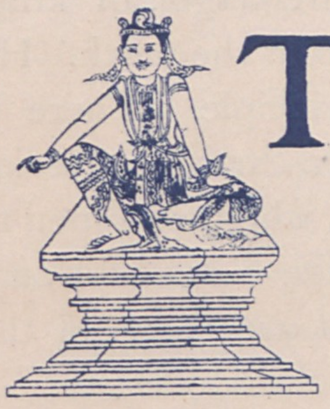




Mán Nat, Mára, the Evil Principle, showing his Indian origin and his Burmanized forms.
1. Mán Nat in his Indian form (Káma). 2. Mán Nat Min, Burmanized as a superior Nat. 3. Mán Nat Min, Burmanized as a superior Nat.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWO ISOLATED NATS.



THE two isolated Nats, who seem to belong to no group, are Nats Nos. 1 and 21. Thagyá Nat, as already explained, is not an historical personage, but belongs to the systematised series of supernatural beings, or Nats, taken from Indian Buddhism, of whom he is the chief. He is also the nominal chief of this and every other series of Nats that the Burmese recognise. He is, therefore, Nat No. 1. Nat No. 21 is probably an historical personage, as he is said to have been a trader of Pinyá, who was killed by a tiger on his way home. Pinyá has never been of any importance, except while it was the capital of the Shan dynasty of Pinyá, which flourished between 1298 and 1364. This would fix his death somewhere between those dates. His name as a Nat is Maung Pó Tú Nat.



No. 21. Maung Pó Tú Nat.

I have now come to my two last illustrations, of which I will explain that of Maung Pó Tú first. He was a trader of Pinyá, and was killed by a tiger on the summit of Mt. Ongyaw whilst on his way home. He is, however, represented as riding a tiger, or what may pass for a tiger, and driving it with a stick, in a Court costume, proper for a very high official, or for a prince of the royal family. There is, perhaps, therefore, some legend giving him a royal parentage or connection.

The other isolated Nat, whose picture I have had to keep to the last, owing to the plan of explanation, is the great Thagyá Nat himself, by the common acceptation of every Burman, the prince of all the Nats, of whatever nature or degree: the No. 1 of all lists. The antiquity of his cult is indicated by his name, Thagyá, which represents the Sanskrit word Sakra and not Sakka, the Pali equivalent thereof, thus throwing the date of the cult back to the early times when the old debased Northern (Sanskrit) form of Buddhism was current in Burma and before the present purer Southern (Pali) form began to prevail. The Sakra of the Indian Buddhism was the great ancient god Indra of the Brahmans, the Lord of the Firmament, turned by the Buddhists into the lowest of the three great rulers of the heavens, whom they set

up on adapting the old Brahmanic cosmogony to their reformed ideas. The other two were Mahábrahmá and Mára, the Byammá Nat and Mán Nat of the Burmese. All three, both in Indian and in modern Burmese ideas, descend when necessary to the earth to interfere in the affairs of men: Mahábrahmá and Sakra beneficially and Mára adversely.

The *Mahágítà Médanígyàn* gives scant details about Thagyá Nat. He is, it states, the representative of the King of the Thagyás, who lives on the summit of Myinmó-daung (Mount Méru). It then tells us that on festival days, in his honour, a large shed is erected, and that in this it is proper to act various kinds of plays. Whilst these are going on, there enter the *nat-tén*, or mediums, all dressed alike as men in ornamental bordered *pasós* or waist-cloths, broad-sleeved jackets, and white shawls thrown over the shoulders, with shells in the right hand and young sprigs of the *eugenia* (*thabyé*) in the left. They step forward in a graceful fashion and, standing upright, chant the *Nat-than* as follows:—"I am the king of the worlds that are situated in the midst of the Four Islands, and are surrounded by the Seven Encircling Seas and the Seven Ranges of Mountains [of the Buddhist cosmogony]. The righteous and the pure in heart will I protect, and I will punish such as are ungodly and do evil. Therefore have I descended from a height of one hundred and sixty-eight thousand *yúzanás* [*yójanas* of twelve miles each] to watch over the good and over the bad, and therefore do I pray that every one may avoid evil and cleave fast to that which is good." Then the music strikes up and the ceremony concludes with the vigorous dancing of the Nat-inspired women.

The great interest in this cult for students of religion is that it combines both spirit-worship and spiritualism. The Buddho-Brahmanic mythology connected with Thagyá Nat has been already alluded to several times in the foregoing pages, but to explain the existence of Thagyá it is nevertheless necessary to state the beliefs again briefly. In the Indian Buddhist cosmogony there are six *dévalókas*, or heavens of angels (*dévas* or *nats*), or superhuman beings, living a life of happiness exempt from the ills of humanity, but subject to *káma*, or pleasures of sense. Of these, the Távatimsa Heaven (the Táwadéntha of the Burmese) is the second removed from the earth and is situated on the summit of Mount Méru. It is inhabited by the Sakka or Thagyá angels, of which the archangel, or king, is the deposed god Sakra or Indra of the older Brahmans and the Thagyá Nat of the Burmans. Thagyá exercises a wholly beneficent influence on mankind, and when a good man is struggling with adversity, the fact is made known to Thagyá by his throne becoming hot. He then comes in disguise to the earth for the relief of the sufferer.

Mán Nat is the Indian Buddhist Mára, a much needed abbreviation of the name for the archangel, or king, of the Paranimmitavásavatti Heaven, the highest of the *dévalókas* or angel heavens, the sixth from the earth. He is, therefore, more powerful than Thagyá and is the Tempter, or embodiment of the Evil Principle. There is much said about him in the *Legend of Buddha*, for he constantly interfered with Buddha when on earth, by a series of temptations. His three daughters are Tanhá, Rati and Arati (Passion, Love and Discontent), who tempt men to sin. He owes his exalted position to having, in a former existence, exercised in a high degree the virtue of Dána, or Charity to the priesthood. He is, however, essentially a wicked angel, and his pleasures are those of the senses. Like Thagyá, he constantly interferes in the affairs of men.

Byammá Nat represents the Indian Buddhist Mahábráhman or Brahmá, borrowed from the old Brahmanical faith, but greatly degraded from his position as one of the greatest of the gods to that of an archangel. Mahábráhman in Buddhism is the archangel, or king, of the Brahmá angels inhabiting the Brahmá Heaven, just as Thagyá and Mán Nat rule their respective Déva Heavens; but the difference between the *déva* and *brahmá* angels is that the latter are much more ethereal and altogether higher beings, free from *káma*, or sensual passions. There are twenty Brahmá Heavens, sixteen of which are inhabited by corporeal and four by incorporeal beings. Byammá Nat, however, is a shadowy power, and though he interferes in the affairs of men, yet he hardly does so in a tangible manner, and practically the great supernatural beings who control human life are Thagyá Nat, the Saviour, and Mán Nat, the Tempter.

Mythologically, these three great archangels of the modern Burman are the descendants, much affected by the indigenous Animism, of the three great original gods of the Brahmanical Trinity—Brahmá, Vishnú and Siva—the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. But in the Burma of to-day, it is Sakra, as Thagyá, who takes the most important place and is the Nat that is the Lord of Life, the Recording Angel, the supernatural being most revered and most respected. At the commencement of the New Year, during the Thingyàn, or Water-throwing Festival so familiar to all foreign residents in Burma, he visits the Earth for three days for the general good; and I well recollect, in the last Burmese War, that in the afternoon of the most important of these three days, at the beginning of the year 1250 B.E. (April, 1888), there was a sudden and vivid flash of lightning, followed by crashing thunder, which gave great satisfaction to the people of the royal city of Mandalay, because it was positive evidence to them of the presence among them of Thagyá himself in the days of their adversity, a notion having its root in the very foundations of Indian belief.

A similar pathetic tale is told in *The Soul of a People*:—"The highest Nats live in the mountains. The higher the Nat the higher the mountain; and when you get to a very high peak indeed, like Mainthóng Peak in Wunthó, you encounter very powerful Nats. They tell a story of Mainthóng Peak and the Nats there, how all of a sudden, one day in 1885, the strangest noises came from the hill. High up on his mighty side was heard the sound of great guns firing slowly and continuously; there was the thunder of falling rocks, cries as of someone bewailing a terrible calamity, and voices calling from the precipices. The people living in their little hamlets about his feet were terrified. Something, they knew, had happened of most dire import to them, some catastrophe which they were powerless to prevent, which they could not even guess. But, when a few weeks later there came, even into those remote villages, the news of the fall of Mandalay, of the surrender of the king, of the 'great treachery,' they knew that this was what the Nats had been sorrowing over. All the Nats everywhere seem to have been distressed at our arrival, to hate our presence, and to earnestly desire our absence. They are the spirits of the country and of the people, and they cannot abide a foreign domination."

The visit of Thagyá is, as above stated, the occasion of the feast best known to Europeans in Burma, the Water Festival, which commences by the firing of cannon and ends with a general dousing of each other by the youthful members of the populace, and throwing water on all they dare, including Europeans and strangers. I have known a party of young Cooly women, whom I had employed officially, come solemnly to me in Mandalay to ask if I had any objection to having a pot of water thrown over me for good luck! This throwing of water is the popular survival of the washing of the images of Buddha with holy water, enjoined at this season, and no doubt of Indian Brahmanic origin, as has been already noted. It is, in fact, using for carnival purposes an idea that is essentially religious in origin. The Brahmanic cast of the whole festival comes out also very strongly in another ceremony connected with it. A bullock intended for slaughter is bought from a Muhammadan butcher and taken round the village, followed by a festive throng. Its price is collected on the road, and it is then ransomed and set free by the populace as an act of merit, *jívita-dána*, life-saving charity. That is the modern explanation, though, beyond doubt, by heredity the particular "merit" consists in saving the life of "the son of the cow."



No. 1. Thagyá Nat.

Naturally, Thagyá, from his popularity, is variously represented in effigy and picture. He is sometimes drawn as being clothed in royal white, standing on a three-headed white elephant, and having in his hands a *sankh* shell and a swish for keeping off the flies. In my collection he is shown in all his royalty, seated on a lotus throne on the elephant Eyáwun (Pali, Erávaṇa), on whose august back he makes his annual visit to the Earth. He bears a fan in his hand, and before him is his driver, and behind him a faithful guardian *balú*.

Indian Goddesses as Nats (Burmanized).

1. Kalyáméttá Nat-thamí (Kalyání, the True Friend). 2. Milekku Nat-thamí (Mahá-Lakshmí).
3. Nigandá Nat-thamí (Párvatí, Niganthí). 4. Sandí Nat-thamí (Bhavání).



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N.B.—A set of full-page coloured illustrations of the Thirty-Seven Nats precedes the Preface, and a set of similar black and white illustrations follows the Index. Both sets are named and numbered alike. A name followed by * and a number in brackets in the Index refers to the corresponding number in these two sets of illustrations. Abbreviations: desc.=description; fcg.=facing; *ill.*=illustration.

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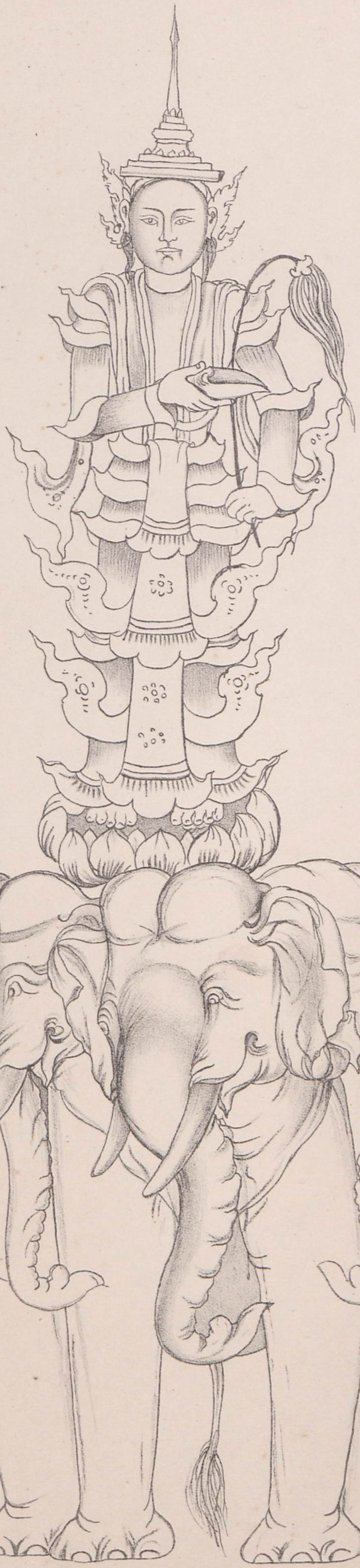
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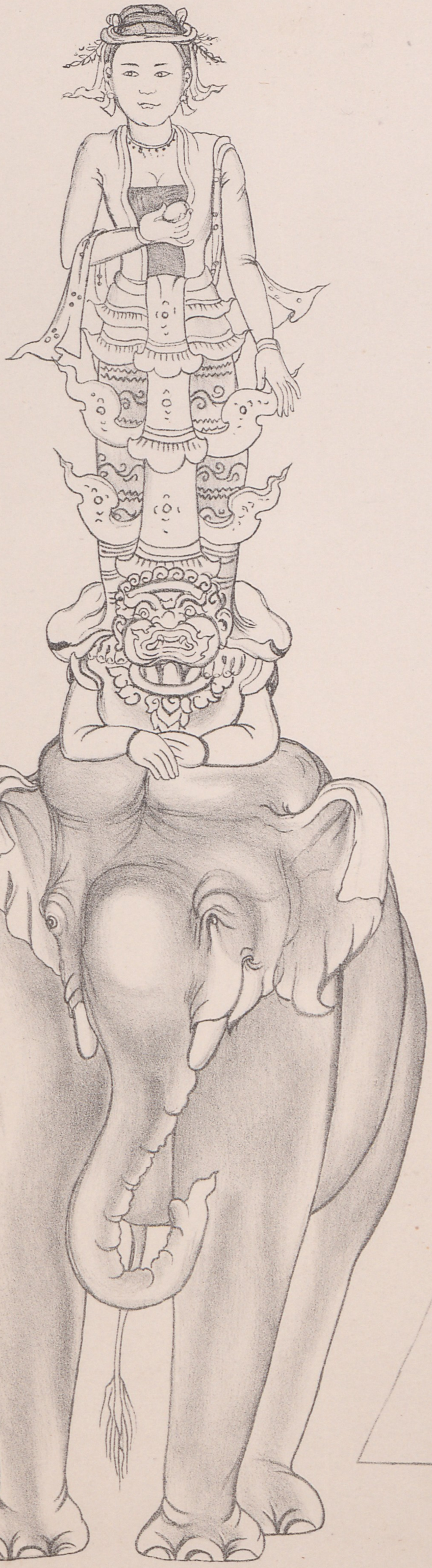
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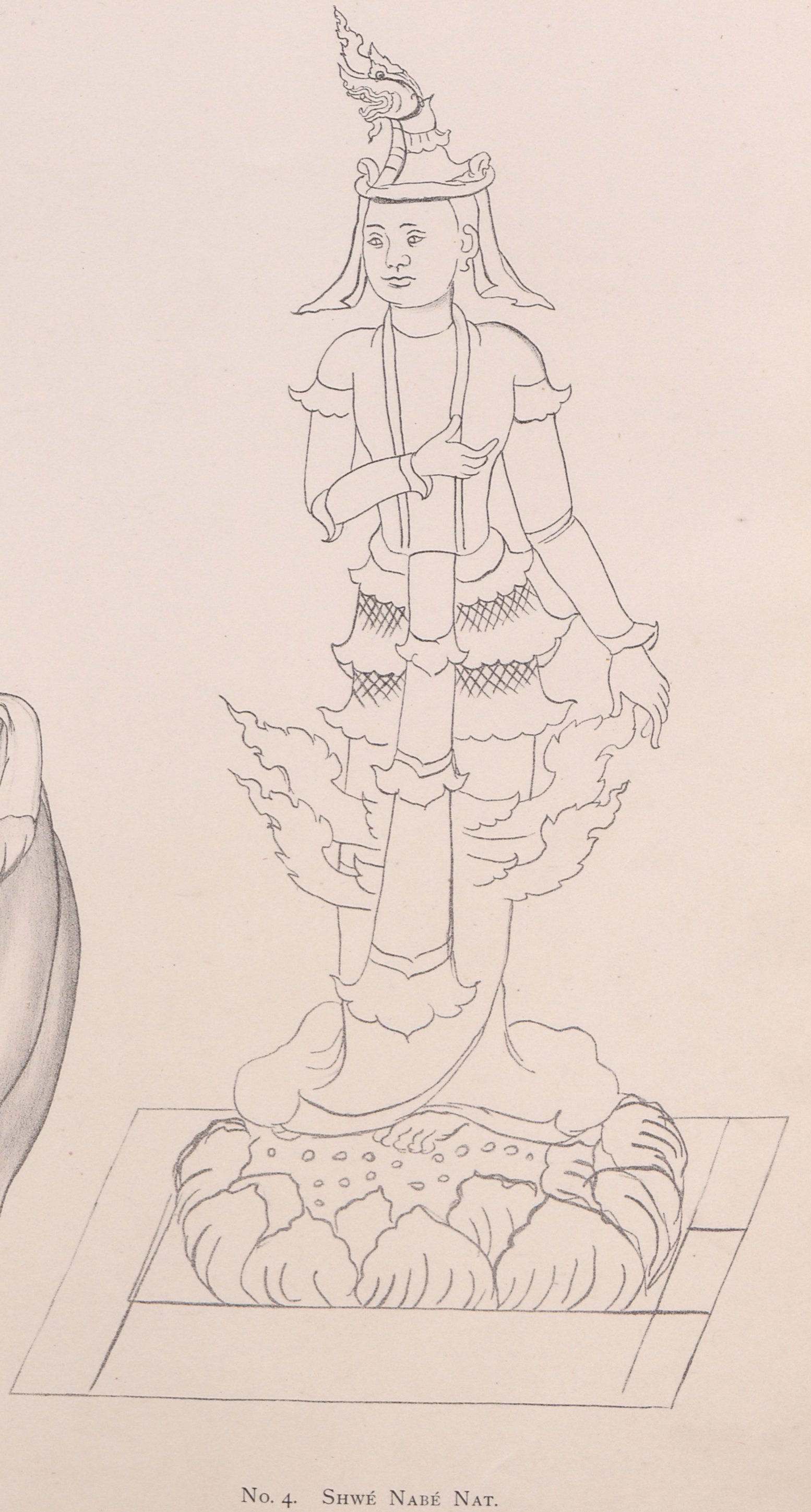
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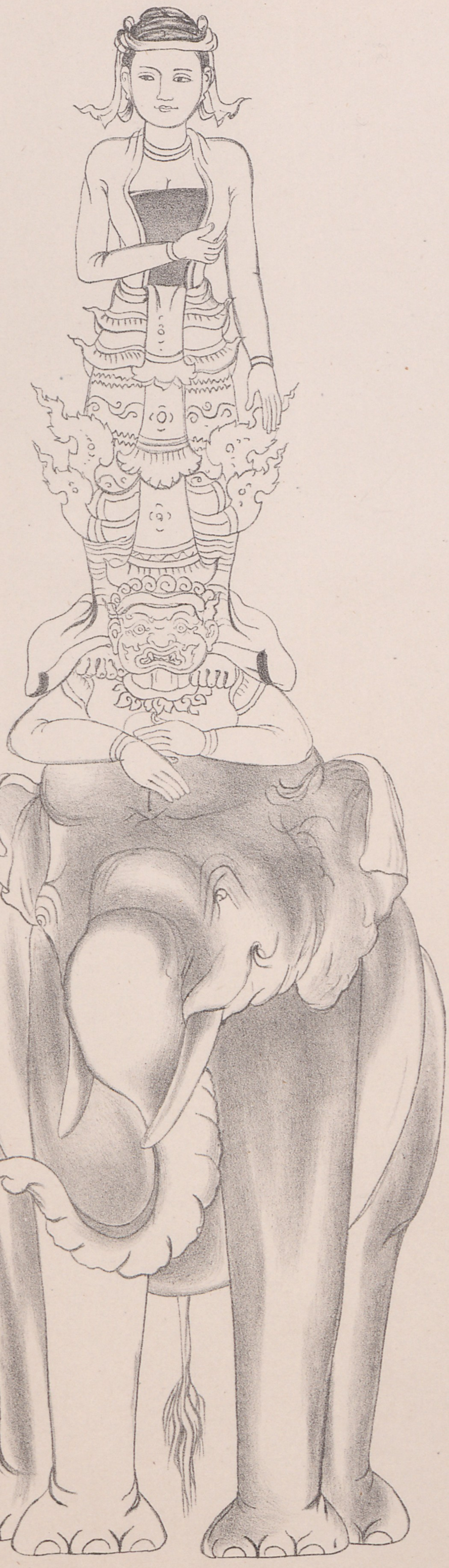
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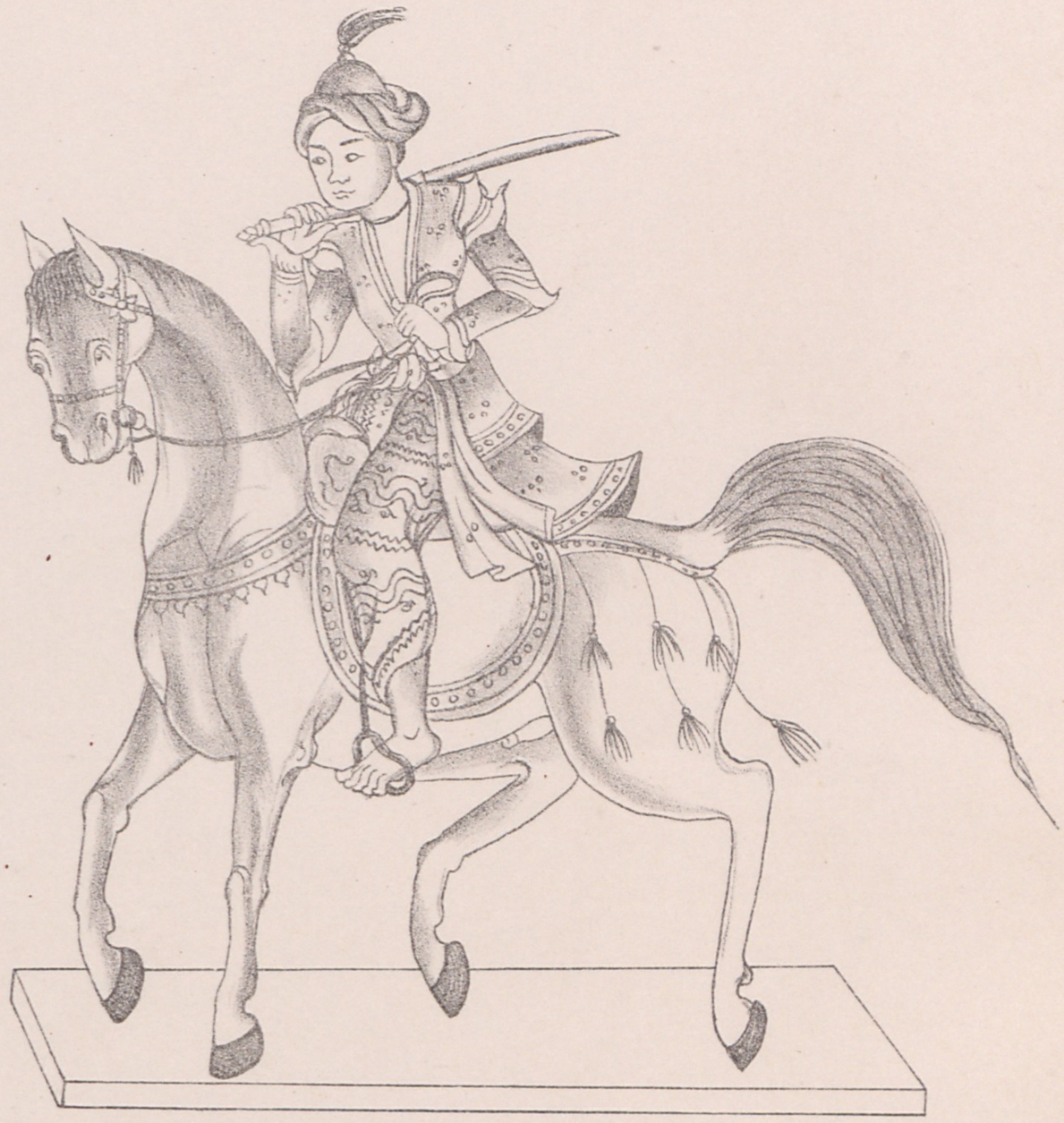


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No. 7. Mintará Nat.



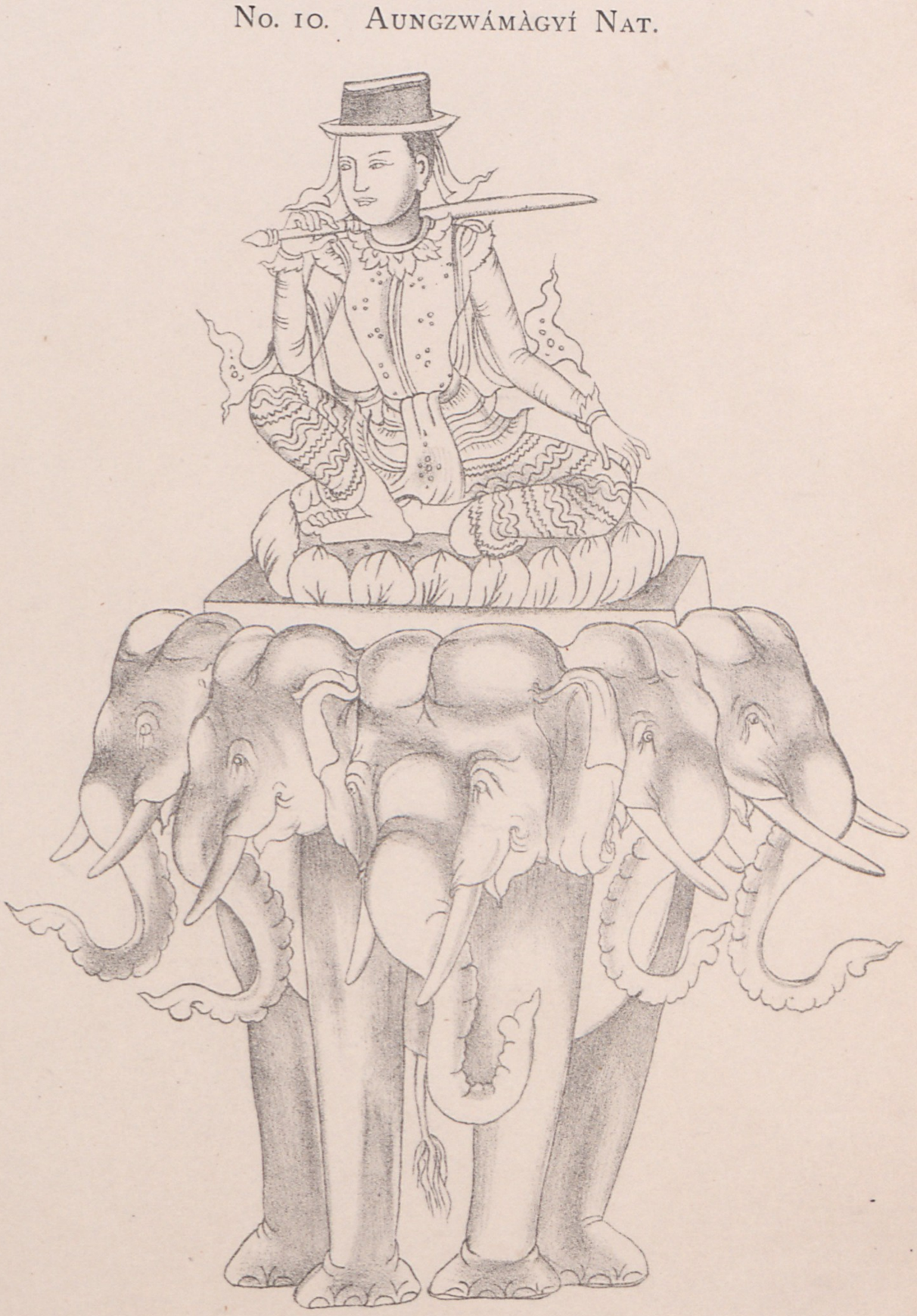
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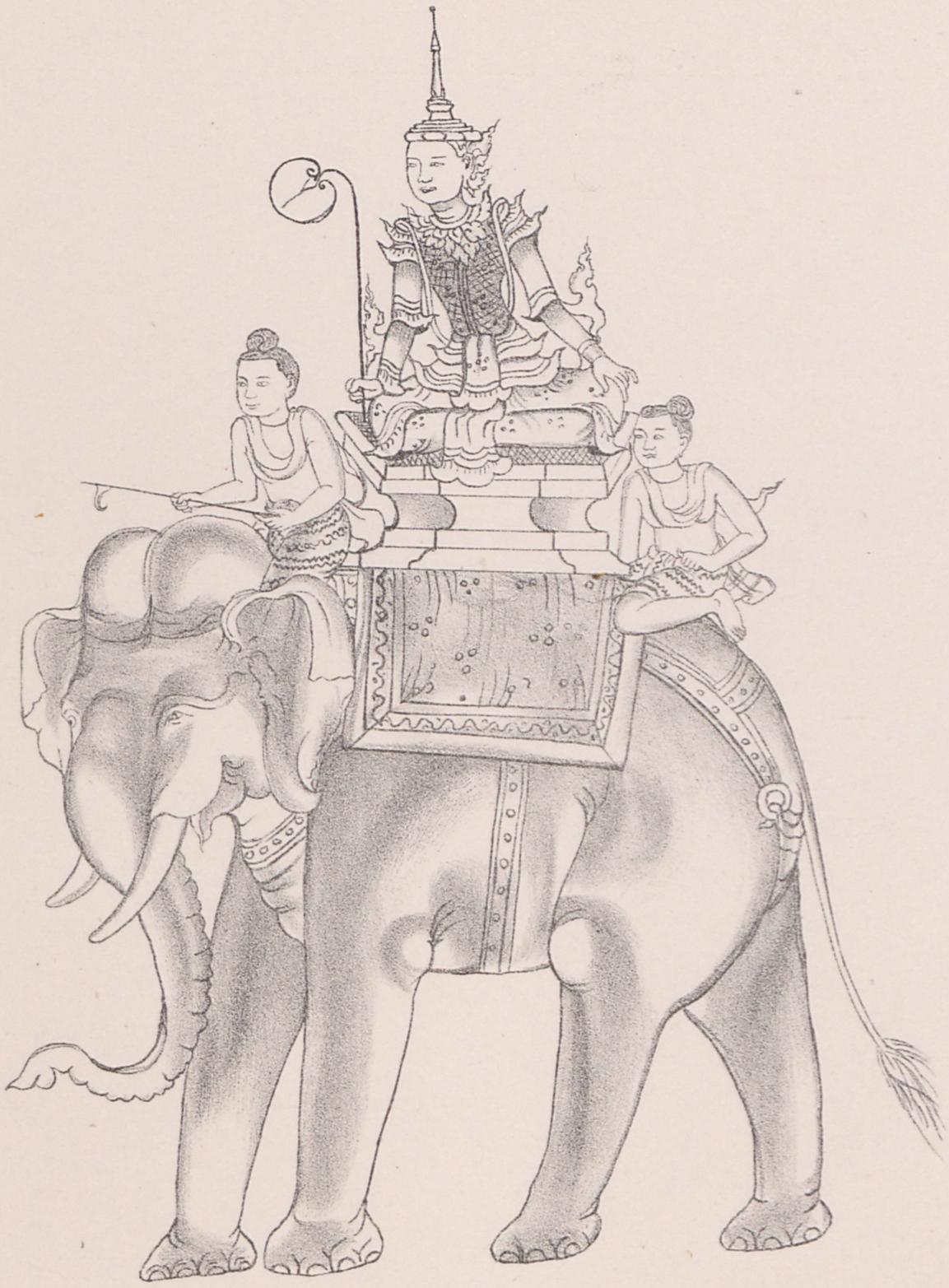
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No. 9. Shwé Nawrathá Nat.



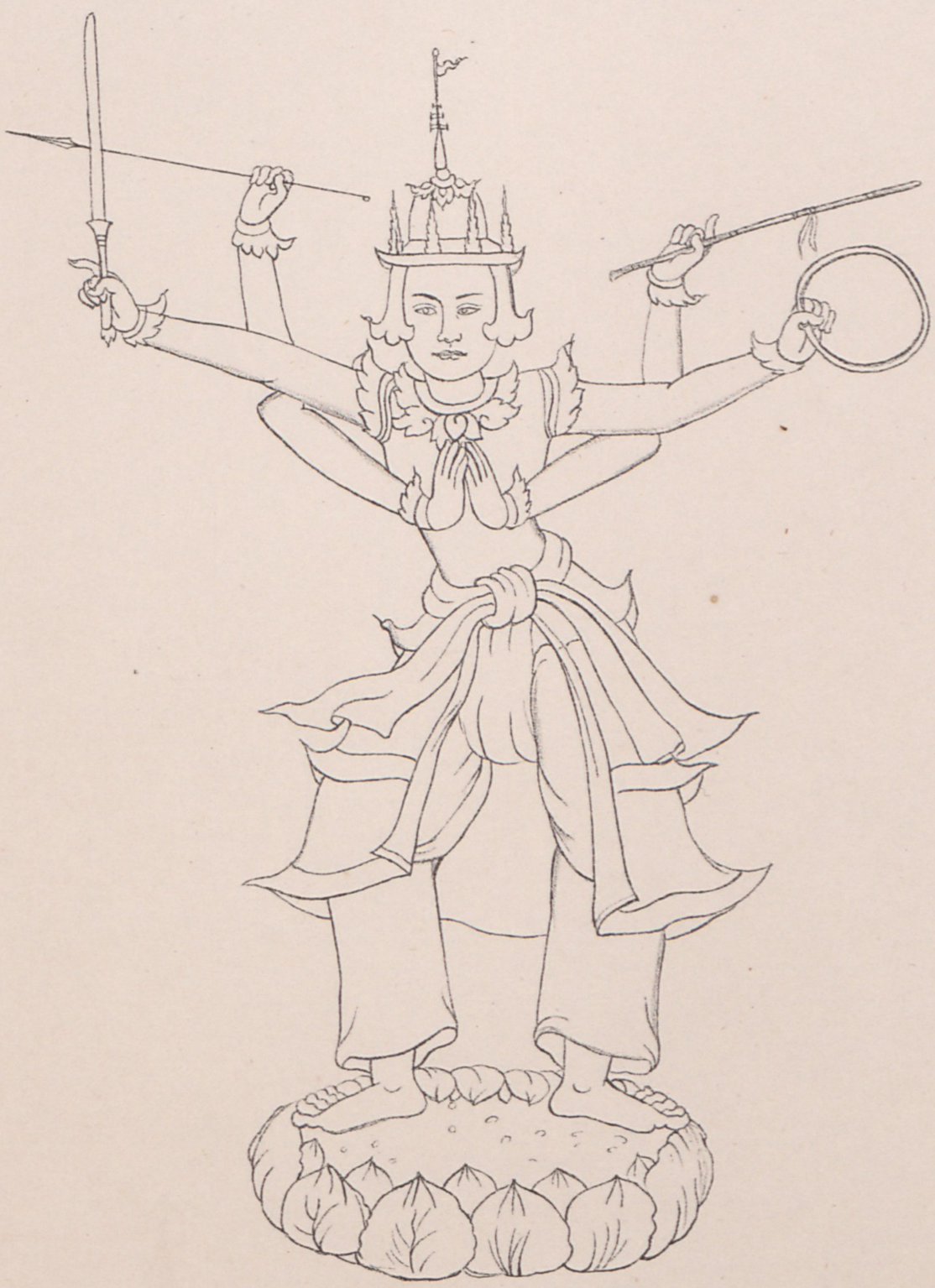
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No. 12. Aungbinlè Sinbyúshin Nat.



No. 14. Maung Minshin Nat.



No. 13. Taungmàgyí Nat.



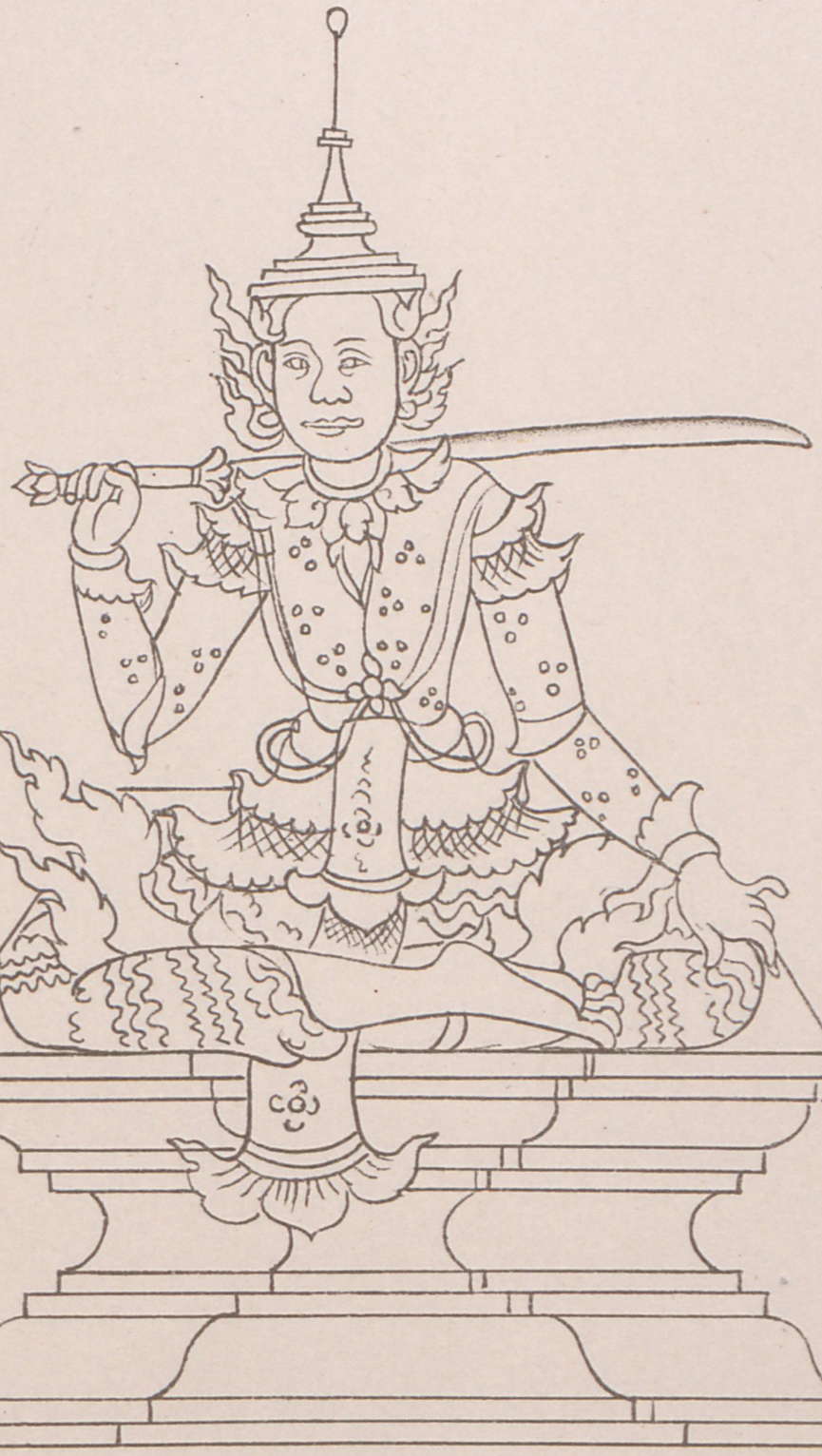
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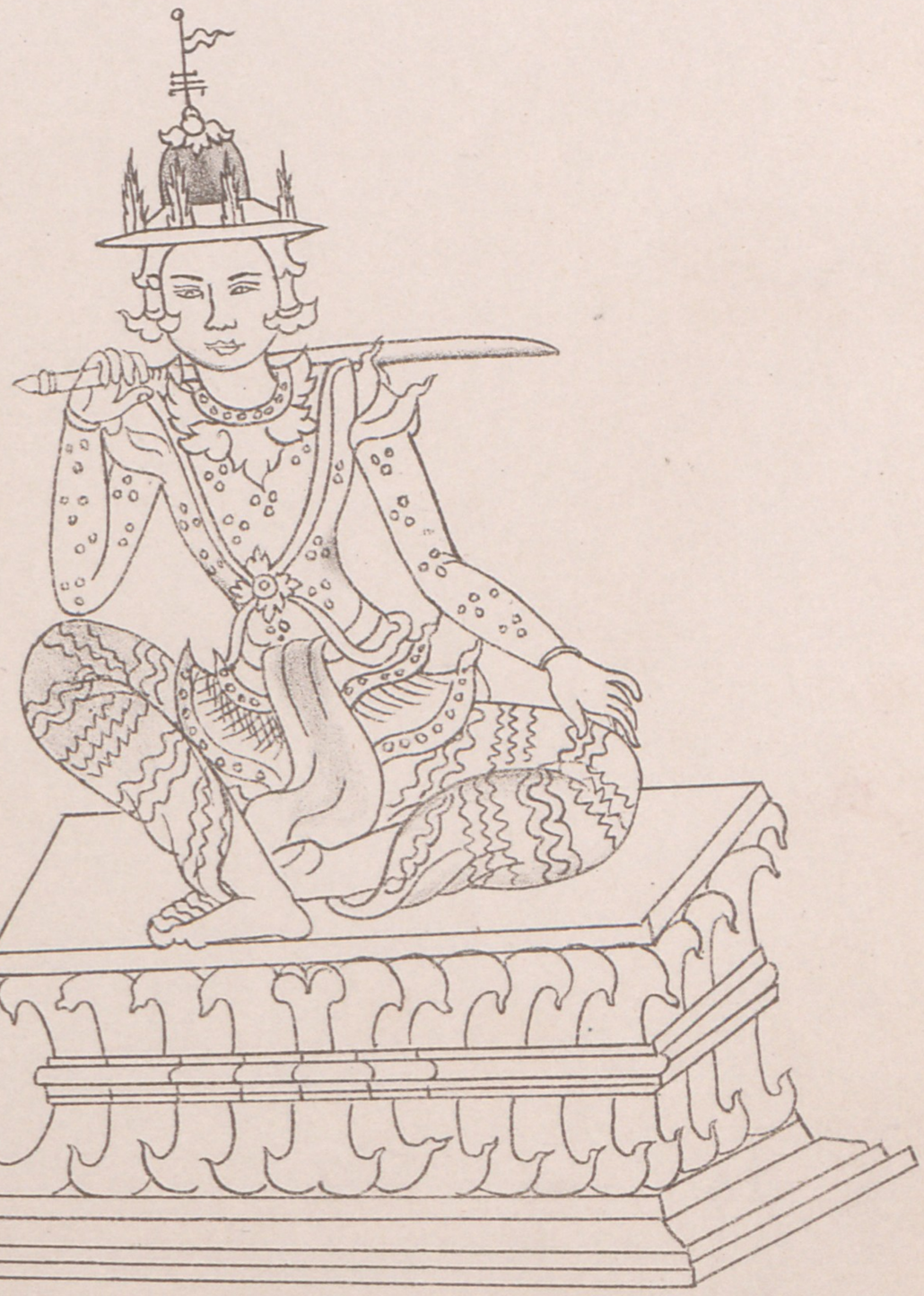
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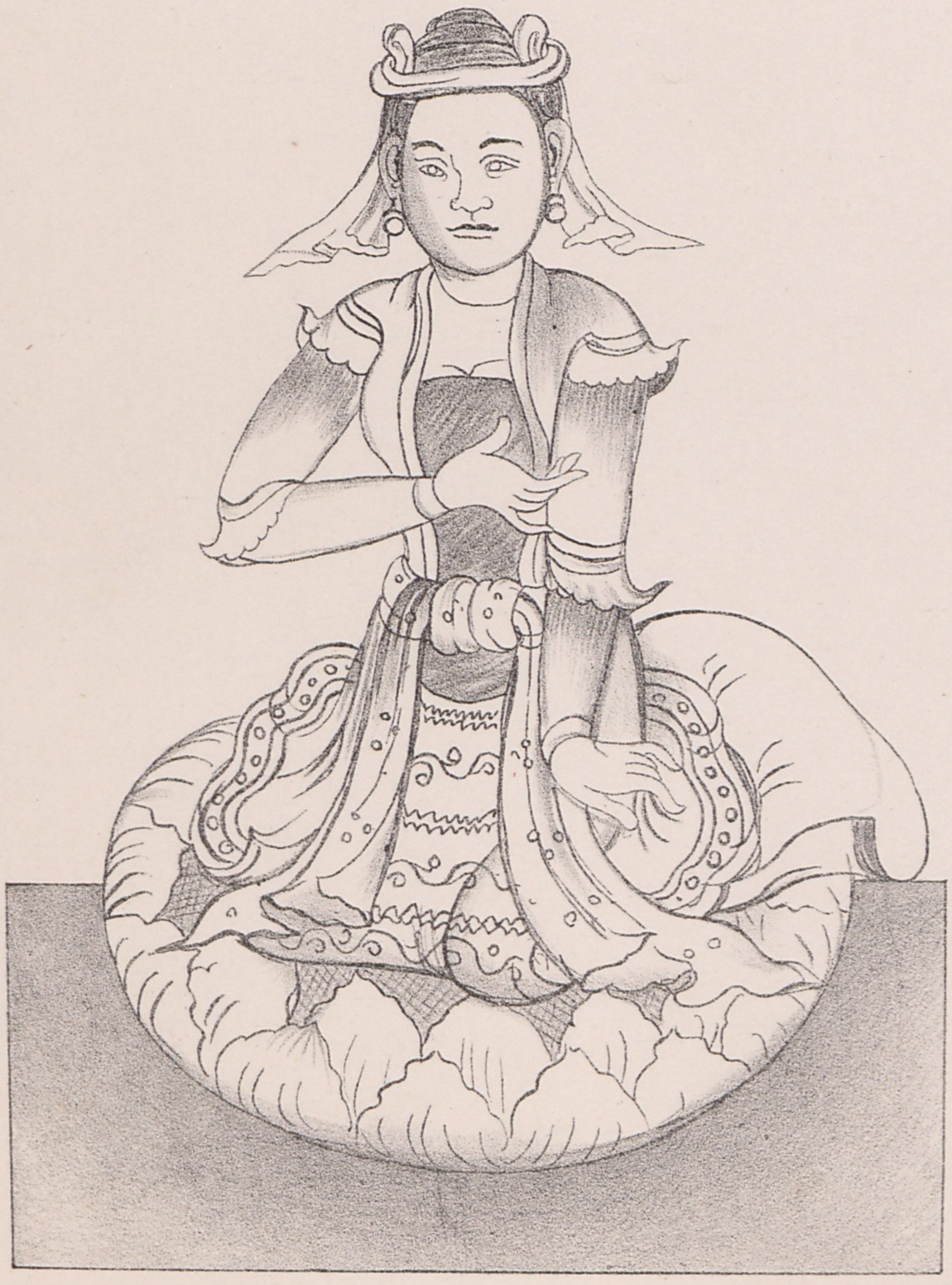
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No. 17. Tabin Shwédí Nat.



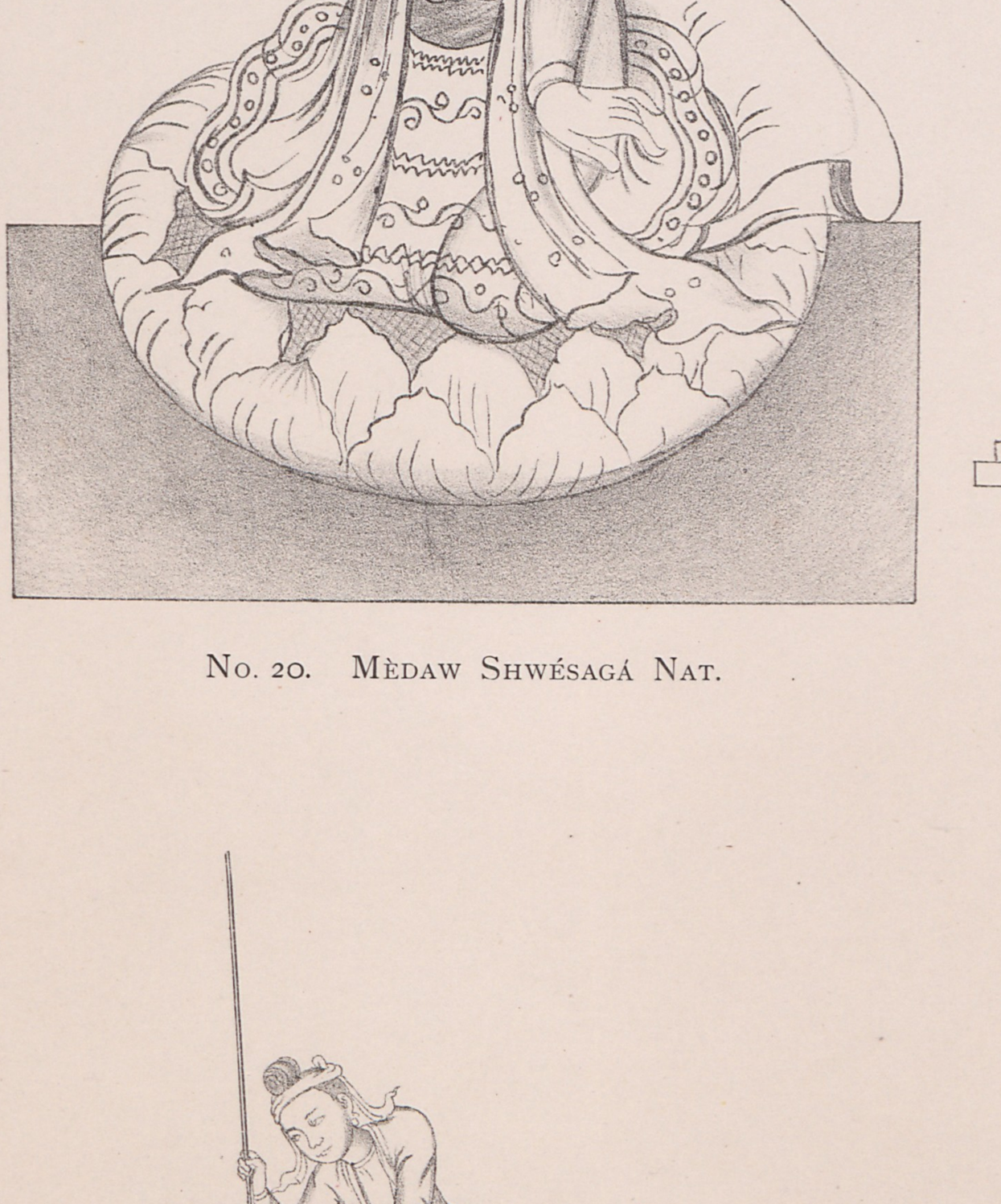
No. 19. Shwé Sippin Nat.



No. 20. Mèdaw Shwésagá Nat.



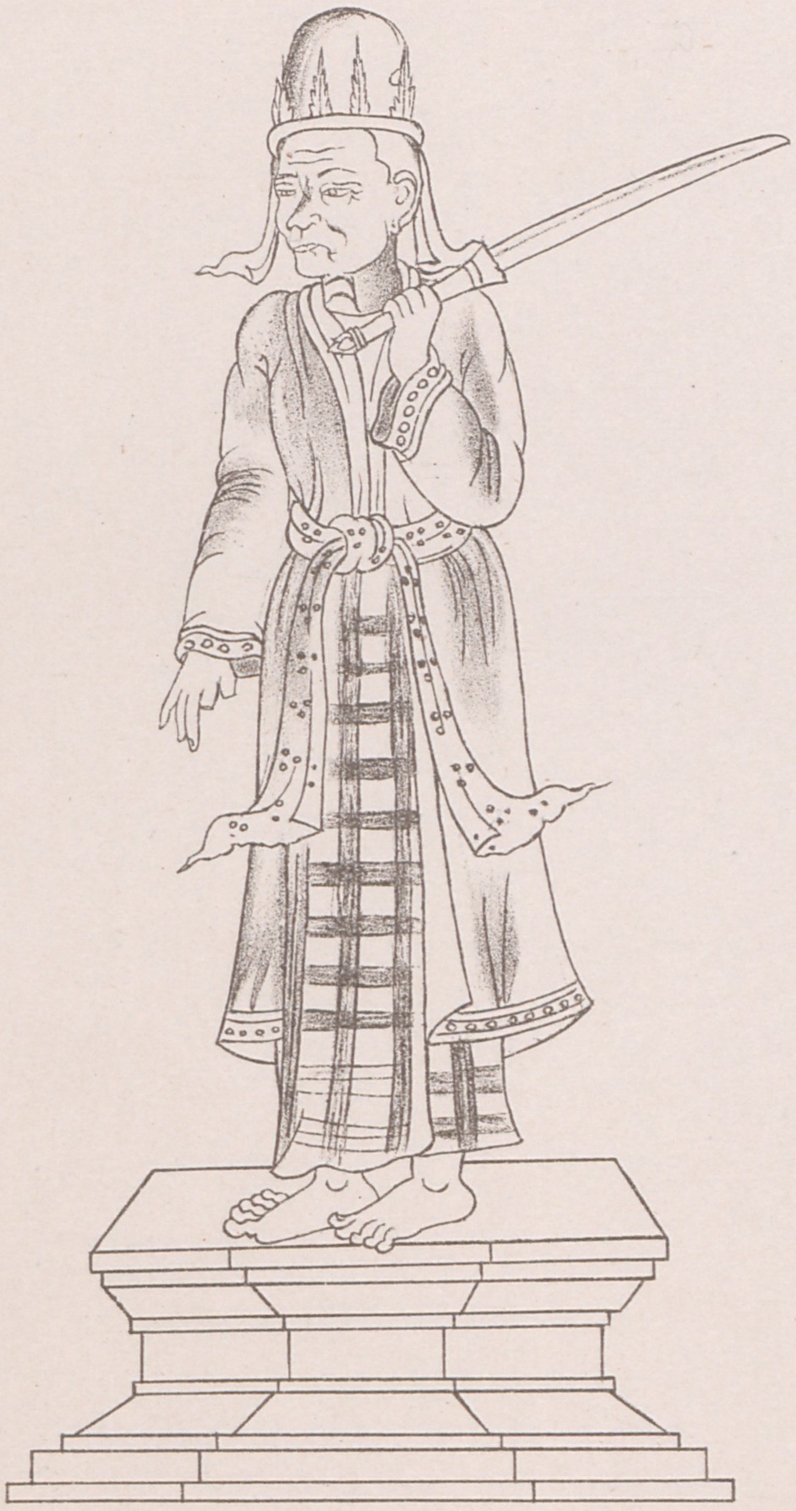
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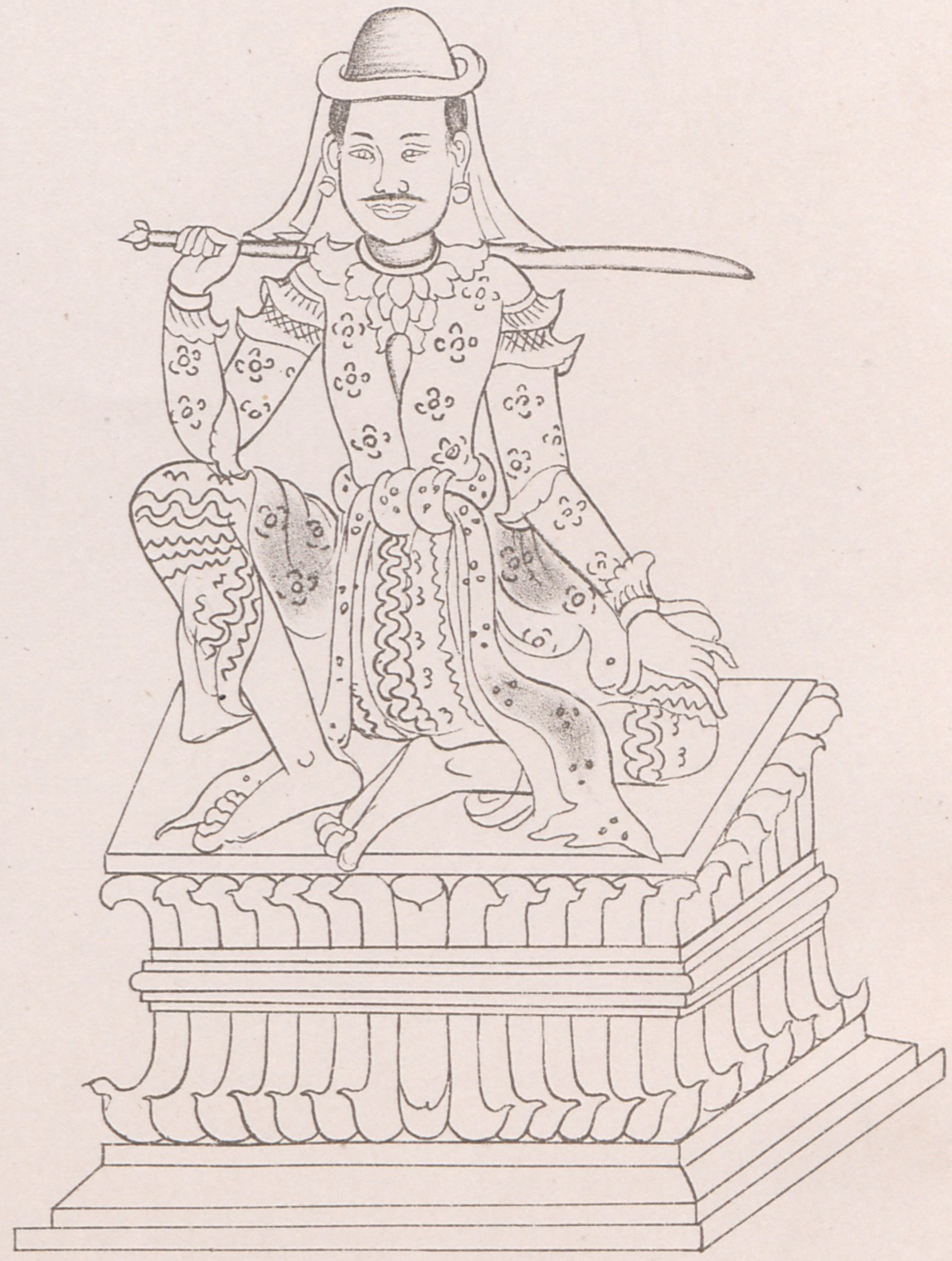
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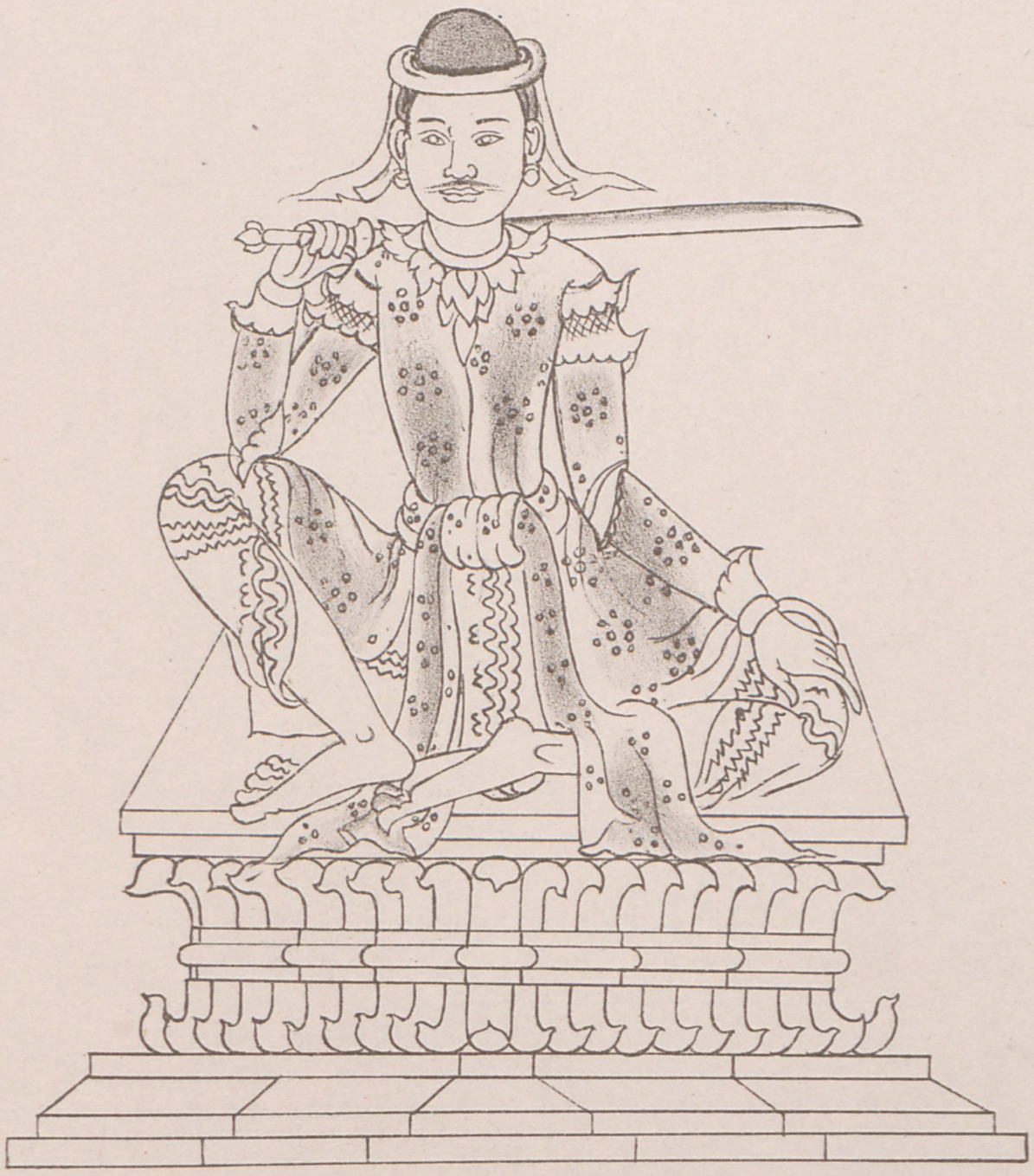
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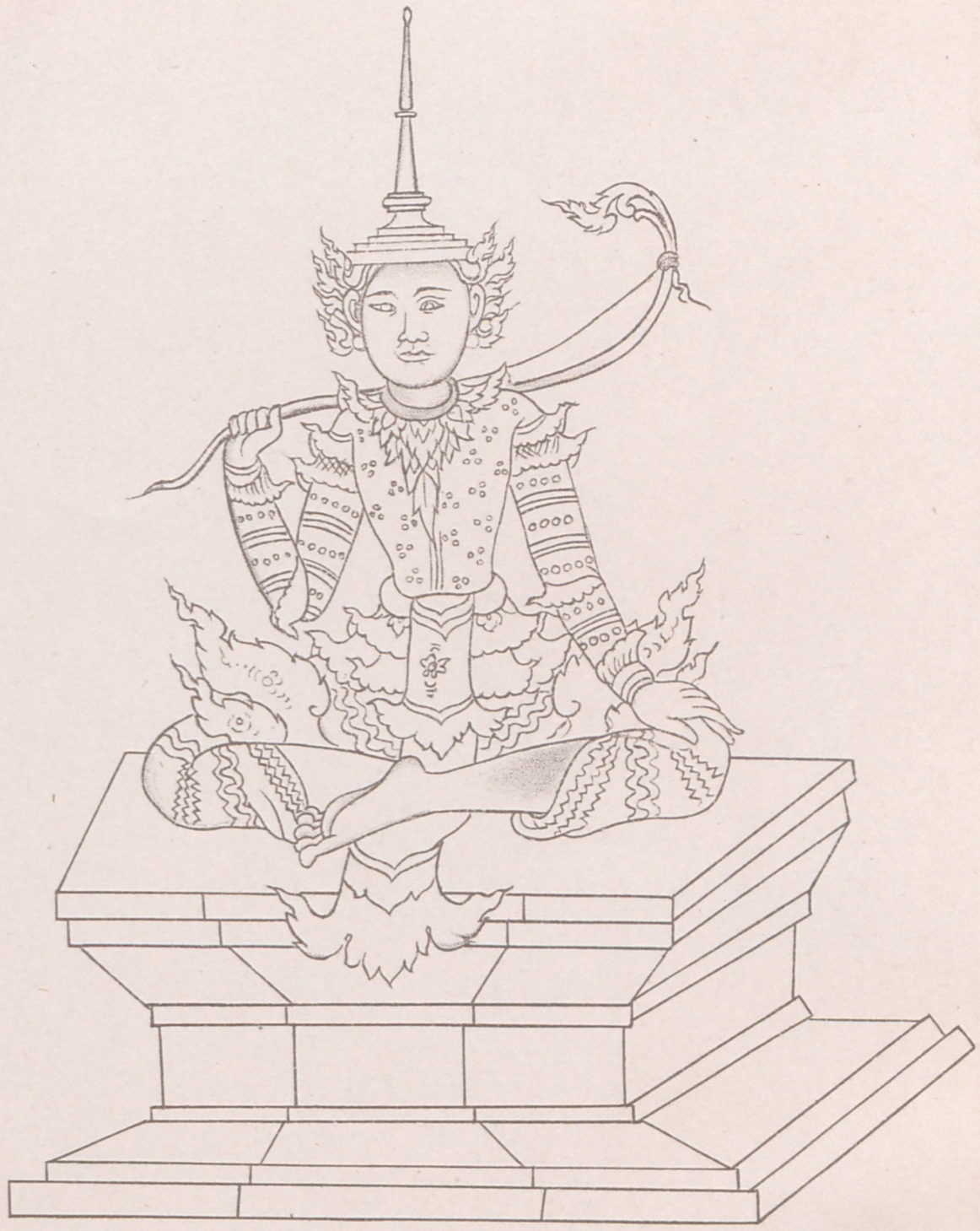
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No. 27. Mintha Maung Shin Nat.



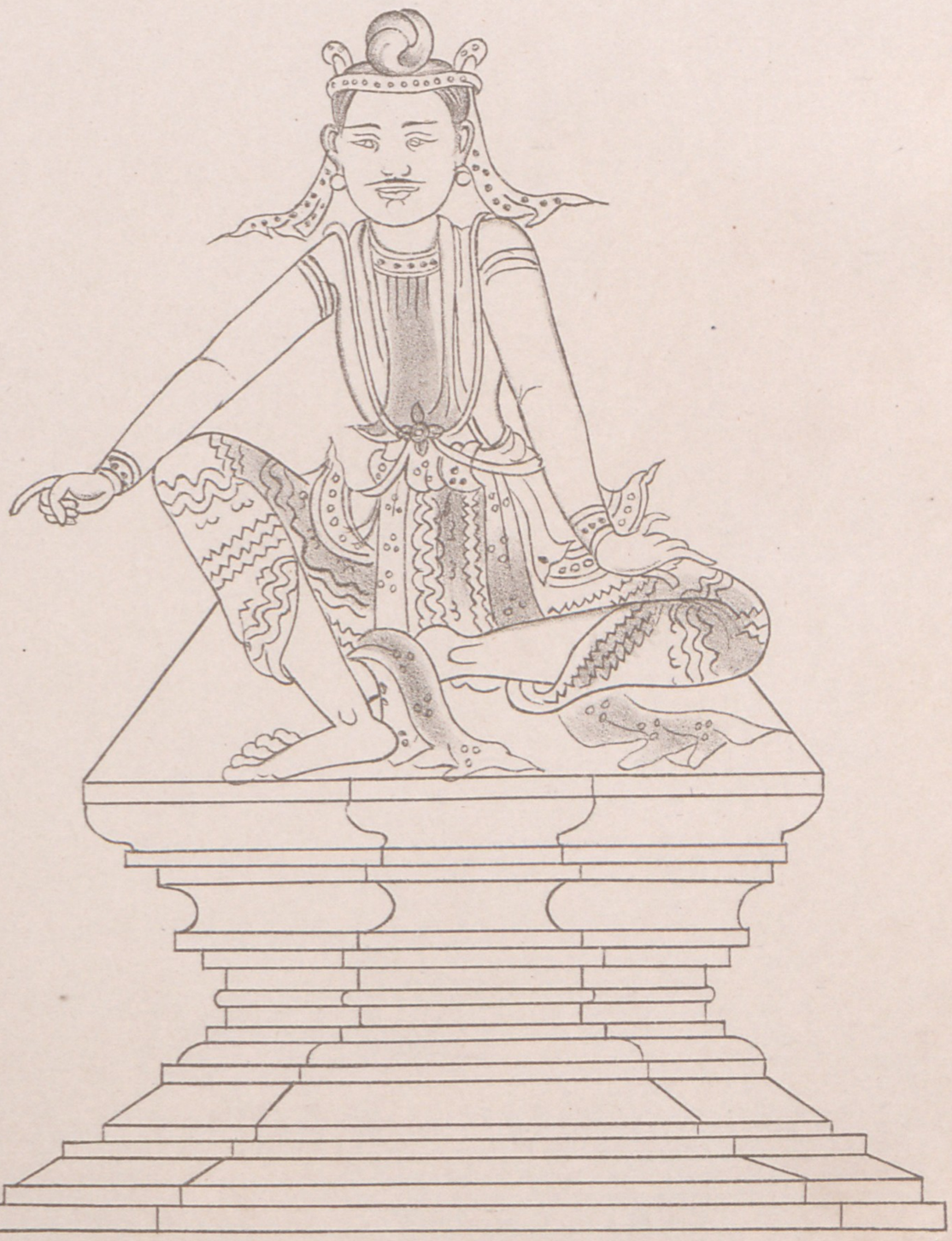
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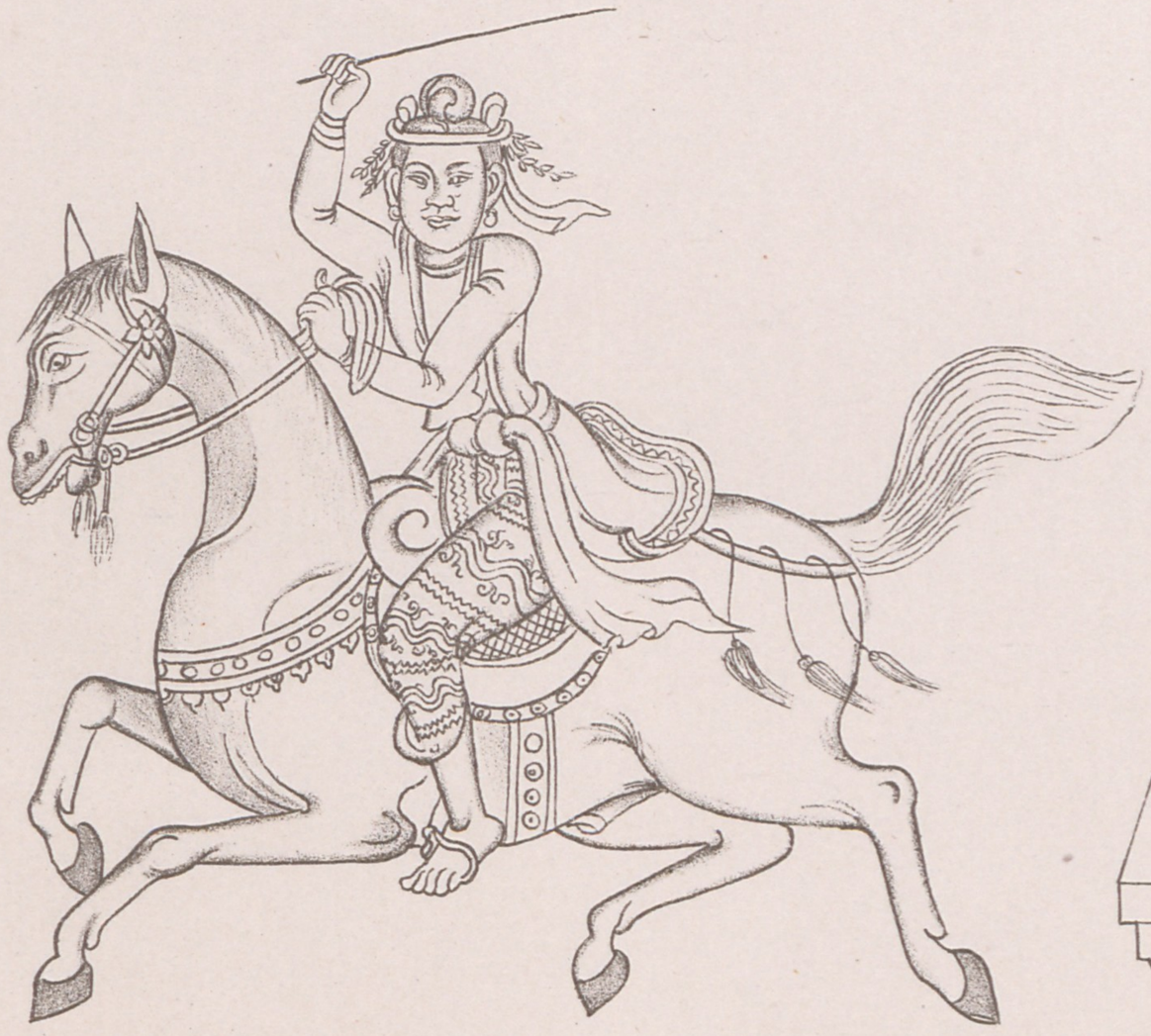
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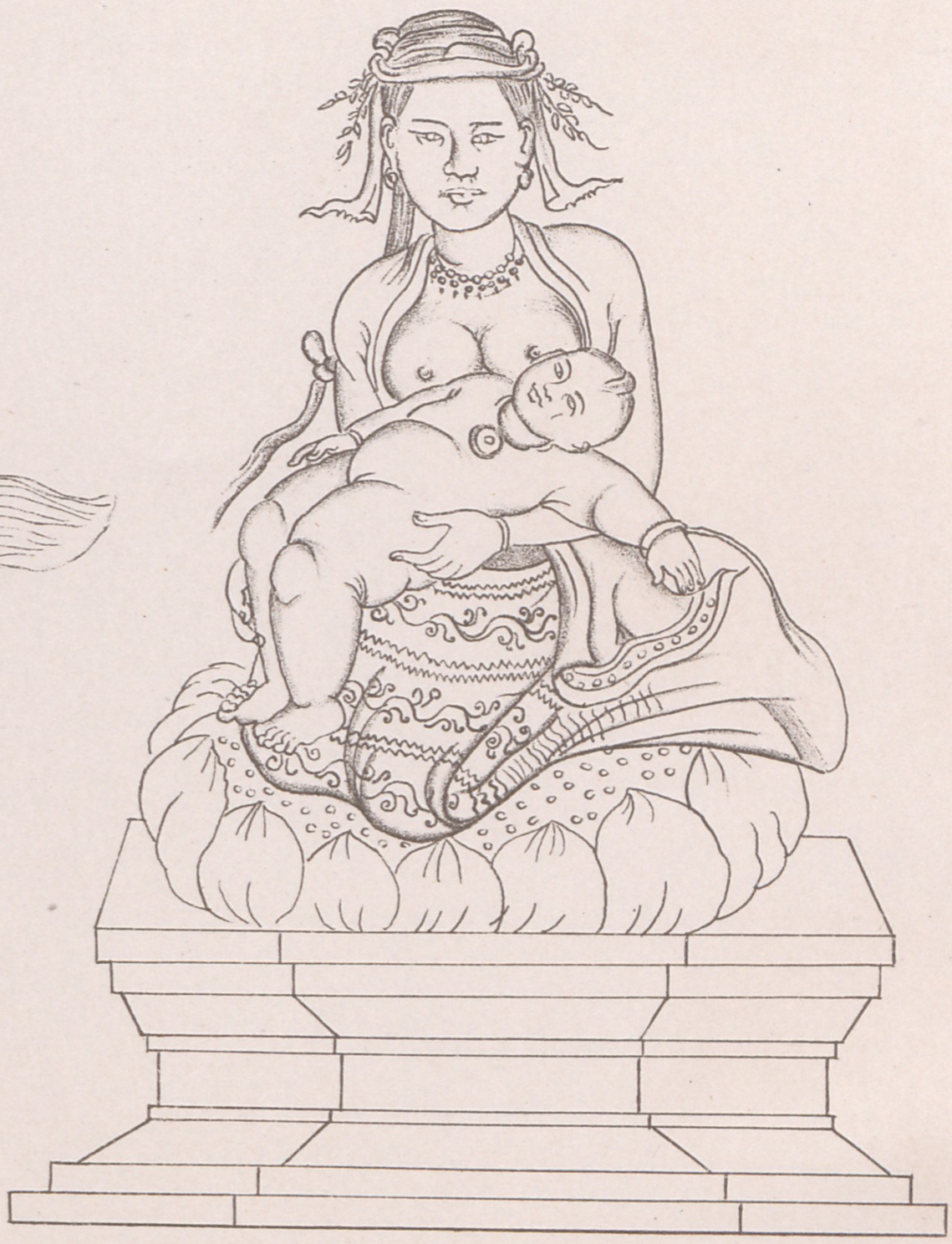
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No. 31. Min Síthú Nat.



No. 32. Min Kyawzwá Nat.



No. 34. Anauk Míbayá Nat.

No. 33. Myaukpet Shinmà Nat.



No. 35. Shingón Nat.



No. 36. Shingwá Nat.



No. 37. Shin-nèmí Nat.